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MAKING GOOD IN CANADA

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SHACK BUILT ON WAPOOSE RIVER BY MR. LETT'S PROSPECTING
PARTY WITH ELEVEN NAILS.

THE FORGE IN THE FOREST, WAPOOSE RIVER.

This was a very primitive arrangement.

MAKING GOOD IN CANADA

BY

FREDERICK A. TALBOT

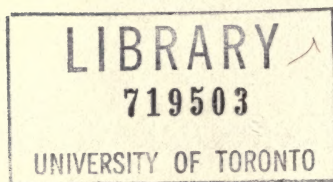
AUTHOR OF

"THE NEW GARDEN OF CANADA," "THE MAKING OF A GREAT CANADIAN RAILWAY,"
ETC.

WITH THIRTY-TWO FULL-PAGE
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PREFACE

"SAY, stranger, been up north?"

"Aye. You going up there?"

"Yep. Must do something."

"Well, you've got on the wrong road. There's nothing doing."

"Ain't thar? Well, thar darn soon will be when I strike the place."

This conversation took place between a raw-boned, attenuated Eastern Canadian and myself while killing time on the platform of Englehart Station, way up in Northern Ontario, where trains are few and far between, and where the sights of the neighbourhood may be absorbed in five minutes.

My interrogator carried his sole few belongings in a small grip, and he had a roll of dollar bills tucked in his belt. I had returned from the Porcupine Gold Country, which just then was looming large in the eyes of the fortune-hunters. From the Britisher's point of view the prospect for human activity was about as inviting as it is in a casual ward.

My pessimism amused the stranger. He had roughed it hard down among the cities, and had failed to find the hole in which his efforts would fit, so had made a big move in another direction. He had not spent money on railway fares for nothing. However dismal the outlook might be, he was ready to turn his hand to anything,

and grimly determined to get a fresh boost in life's race somehow. It would not be his fault if things did not shape themselves according to his perspective.

This is the true spirit in which the new arrival must view and attack things Canadian. No calling is too humble ; no occupation should be despised. Before the topmost rung of the ladder is gained there must be a spirited contest round the lower rounds, and a stiff fight in order to secure a firm foothold.

I have been asked repeatedly what to do and how to set about things in Britain across the Atlantic. "What's the life like ?" "Do I stand a chance ?" and so on. I have set out a few of the varied openings for industry in the country, and have endeavoured to extend some idea of the difficulties to be overcome, and the prizes to be won, in the eternal struggle for existence and success. I have endeavoured to give both sides of the question impartially, and the Tenderfoot must judge for himself whether his spirits, physique, and ability fit him to woo Fortune in some form or other in the Dominion.

I have roughed it a bit myself, and am able to give the results of my own experience, with that of companions. Canada is by no means carpeted with gold. The treasure lies beneath the surface, and demands a certain exertion for its recovery, as in every other country, the extent of which varies according to the calling and to the character of the seeker.

FREDERICK A. TALBOT.

Hove,

September, 1912.

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STRIKING CAMP : MOUNT ROBSON IN THE BACKGROUND.

Horses corralled ready for loading up. (The Author's camp.

MAKING GOOD IN CANADA

CHAPTER I

THE PACKER

ALTHOUGH the Dominion of Canada is being meshed from coast to coast in a network of steel, the day when the iron horse will supersede all other means of locomotion and transportation still remains very far distant. The country is full of such startling surprises. So long as tempting prize-packets in the form of new and richly fertile tracts of farming land, or mountain slopes rich in minerals, are to be picked up by the hardy pioneers and frontiersmen, so long will the wilds exercise their unfathomable fascination and irresistible call.

The frontiersman in the teeming city is like the Eskimo in the tropics. The song of civilization is a nightmare ; there is an absence of that "roughing it" in which he revels ; while the chances of making a "strike," according to his peculiar interpretation, are very frail. He cannot stifle the longing for the droning music of the virgin forest, the solitude of the wilderness, the difficulties of the trail ; and the desire to assist in the uplifting of the country in the interests of commerce and industry.

That is the reason why, from time to time, the discovery of some new-natural resources of great value sends a throb of excited interest vibrating round the world. Ninety-nine times out of one hundred the new lode-

stone is in one of the most out-of-the-way corners of the country, difficult of access, and entailing terrible privations and dangers innumerable in the attempt to gain it. The dogged determination and perseverance of the pioneering nomad revealed the agricultural possibilities of the Peace River country, the golden treasure-chest of the Yukon, the minerals of Northern Ontario, the wondrous Clay Belt, the fertile Nechaco and Bulkley Valleys, and so on.

When the news of the frontiersmen's newly-found treasure-trove trickles out, then there is a wild stampede from all quarters to the new hub of excitement. Everyone is fired by that ambition—to be in on the “ground floor.” The speculation fever grips the victim so malignantly that he never pauses to dwell upon the hardships he is doomed to suffer in order to reach the new goal. The malady rises to its critical point when the edge of the wilderness is struck, but the temperature of determination to go ahead falls rapidly as the wrestles with fallen wood, swamp, and rushing wide rivers loom up in deadly earnest. The faint-hearted, after battling a few days against the hostile forces of Nature, abandon the quest, and return to the cities raging calamity howlers, just because the prize has proved to be beyond their grasp.

Among the earliest participants in the rush is the packer with his train of sturdy animals. The community in the heart of the wilderness must be kept going from the outposts of civilization ; a link of communication must be established to take in provisions, clothing, and a hundred and one other necessities of life. It is not long after a new land has risen in the commercial firmament before strings of mules and ponies, driven by the rugged packers, are to be seen winding their tortuous ways through the dense forest, laden with an assortment of articles, from bags of flour to dissembled iron stoves,

clothing, tools, and what not. It is the packer, with his devil-may-care spirit, who keeps the new country alive.

The packer is a human puzzle. Meet him in the city, and he gives you the impression of a gentleman at large, with his immaculate white linen, the latest thing in tweeds, his feet decked in gaily coloured hose and encased in the most fashionable of footwear, with kid gloves and a soft Homburg hat. As a rule, you will find him in the saloon, treating all and sundry with that lavish hospitality born of the bush. Probably he has just come in from a long sojourn in the wilds, and has found a large sum awaiting him as the reward for his labours. He has drawn his notes, and is trying to rid himself of them with the utmost speed. When his pockets have been depleted, he sheds his stylish attire, carefully presses and folds it away, to hit the trail once more.

Meet him in the bush, with his team jogging wearily along at about two miles an hour, and he is the anti-thesis of him whom you saw in the city; the gentleman of civilization has devolved into a tramp of the woods. His nether garments are decidedly the worse for wear, and invariably saturated like a sponge from contact with the soddened brush, or a plunge through a creek. The white linen has given way to a rough flannel shirt and a coarse sweater. His hat strives valiantly to preserve some sign of respectability, while his face and hair are unkempt. His feet are shorn of the gay hose, and are armoured in the nude condition with the roughest and most ungainly of leather boots, built for wear and not for comfort or appearance. He trudges along in silence, viciously chewing his quid of tobacco to keep his throat moist and the inner man quiet until camp is pitched. Now and again he gives vent to a violent, raucous outbreak of invective to spur his lagging animals into quicker movement. Yet he is absolute contentment. He

has had enough, so he relates, of the city ; a few weeks in the silent bush is an excellent antidote to boisterous revelry, as well as being an invigorating tonic to a shattered constitution. But when he gets back to the city again—well, there will be something doing.

The packer is emphatic in his statement that his vocation is the finest going. None dares to dispute his contention. Out of doors the round twenty-four hours, living in the purest atmosphere, knocking up against the elements day in and day out, and good pay. He has no worries or anxieties beyond the safety of his animals and packs, is his own master, has as much to eat as he desires, though it may be limited in variety. What more can any man want ?

I met one of these boys of the trail. He was the eldest son of a prosperous English family, his father being a well-known merchant-prince of London. "Guess the family would have a fit if they could see me in this rig-out," he grinned, as he made water squelch musically in his boots, and wrung out his sweater. He had just ploughed his way through a slough, and the water was streaming from him like a dog which has just emerged from the water. "The pater kicked at me coming out here. I went home two years ago, and he said he'd fix me up in his office. I went down to the City with him, but I only stayed an hour. I borrowed the money from him to come back here. The books, desks, figures, and the monotony of it all, fairly scared me. I never regained my wits again until I was astride my old mare and had hit the trail once more."

At first sight packing may appear to be an inferior occupation. Yet from the verdant farms lining the St. Lawrence to the yawning valleys of the Yukon the pack-train is indispensable ; without it Canada would stand still. It is the ship of the bush, ploughing steadily to

and fro, bringing news of the outside world to the isolated communities settled two or three hundred miles from the nearest post-office, and keeping civilization posted up as to how things are going up yonder. It appeals to the average young Britisher who loves to roam in search of excitement and adventure, and it must be confessed that as a packer he will get more than the average share of such fare.

I have been asked often, "What are the qualifications for a packer?" There is only one reply—the ability to stand "roughing it." It is the finest drilling for manhood, and the senses become tuned to a high pitch of perfection. The buffetings are hard and frequent. When I hit the trail for the first time, my knowledge of the horse was typical of the city-bred individual, and I was just as anxious to keep out of the rain. But in a month I caught the true packing spirit—let everything go hang! It mattered little if I were soaked to the skin; dog-tired, I tumbled into dripping blankets at night, with a rock as a pillow. Rain, snow, and sunshine were accepted with indifference, while finding one's way through the trackless forest possessed its own peculiar fascination. It was with keen regret that I shook the mud and dust of the trail from my feet to return to the city once more.

Packing is an art. One does not grasp in a few days the right and wrong way to stow assorted articles on a horse's back so that the weight is well distributed, and not likely to hinder the movement of the beast of burden. Even the pack-horse, though docile, has its own idiosyncrasies, which must be studied; while the diamond hitch is not mastered at first sight, especially when the master of craft under whom you are picking up knowledge as best you can, has the unhappy knack of varying the throw in order to perplex you.

The task of the bell-boy probably is the most un-

enviable. He leads the way. His animal has a loose bell round its neck, the tinkling of which summons the others in Indian-file to follow in its footsteps. The bell-boy picks up the trail, and clears the way for the rest of the train. If the going is good, his work is easy, though terribly lonesome, as probably his colleagues are a quarter of a mile or more behind him. He has to keep going the whole time, because the moment he stops the following animals, deprived of a leader, wander aimlessly into the bush on either hand, producing the worst state of confusion. In the course of an hour or so the animals commence to feel hungry, and grab mouthfuls of fodder from the wayside. The train stretches out into a ragged, lagging line, and the bell-boy has no little difficulty to entice the leading pack-horse to keep closely to his heels.

It is when the obstacles of the trail are encountered that the bell-boy's troubles commence. Caution is demanded, and whatever the character of the obstruction the speed of the pack-train slackens. The other packers liven up to keep their animals under control, crashing through the bush on either side, and laying out with their lariats to prevent straying. The pack-horse is a curious animal. Unless it can be kept to its steady jog-trot, it thinks it may ramble off into the brush on either side of the trail; and when two men have thirty animals to keep in hand, the task is by no means easy.

The forest fire raises many misgivings in the bell-boy's mind. It is no unusual circumstance for a fierce fire to pile up such a barrier of blackened trunks upon the trail as to render progress merely a matter of feet per hour. It may be impossible to wind in and out among the prone monarchs of the forest in a wild zigzag. Then there is no alternative but to have out the axes and to cleave a way through the mass. The work is hard and exacting, especially if the brush is alight and smouldering, causing

the animals to plunge, rear, and stampede in the hot ash.

The slough is a direct contrast to the forest fire. There is no trail, as the ooze covers up all footprints, and the marsh grass, growing luxuriantly to a height of five or six feet, completely hides the ground beneath. The bell-boy has to find a way somehow. With his characteristic dare-devilry he plunges straight into the morass, trusting to the instinct of his beast to get him through. The animal sinks up to its girth in the ooze, and tears its way blindly forward under the action of the spurs, splashing its unlucky rider from head to foot with slime and water. The bell-boy holds on like grim death, steering his horse first to the right and then to the left, in the hope of getting through without parting company with his seat. If the horse comes to a stop and evinces a timidity which cannot be subjugated by spur and lariat, the rider jumps off, and wading, it may be over his waist, pulls his unwilling steed behind him. When dry land at last is regained, both horse and rider shake themselves like dogs to get rid of the superfluous mud. The drivers behind are having an equally lively time. The laden animals hesitate to follow in the bell-boy's wake, and so the drivers, crashing and splashing in a wild *mêlée*, force them across the marsh, hallooing frantically, cursing viciously, and laying out right and left with the lariats until one and all are safely across.

When a broad, rushing river, especially among the mountains, has to be crossed, the going is still more lively and dangerous. The animals are relieved of their loads, which are transported upon a crude raft, fashioned from dead tree-trunks roped together. Manipulating such an ungainly craft across a river, the current of which swings along at a merry pace, and with unseen obstructions bristling everywhere, is no easy task; but the

packer never worries about a difficulty until it hits him squarely, and then he sets to work to extricate himself as best he can. Snags, sandbars, rocks, none of which may appear above the surface of the rippling water, have to be dodged. The packer finds out their existence by running into them ; that is the only manner in which the unknown waterways can be navigated. When the goods have been got safely across, then the horses have to be handled. A runway is hastily improvised upon the river bank, leading into the water by means of a rope corral. The animals are rounded up, hustled into this enclosure, and then the packers gather around and indulge in a sudden outbreak of Indianism. They shout, dance, shriek, and yell in the most fiendish manner, possibly increasing the volume of discordancy by letting off a few revolver shots into the air. The animals, startled, endeavour to rush pell-mell into the bush, but, being hemmed in, and tickled up now and again by the thick end of the lariat, they presently take a headlong dive into the river, as the only avenue of escape from the pandemonium, and, frantically lunging out with their feet, as if demented, swim around until one, more sagacious than the rest, strikes out boldly for the opposite bank, to be followed by the whole bunch, snorting and blowing viciously as they feel the sucking of the undertow. Gaining the opposite shore, one and all plunge into the bush. The packers follow at leisure, and are soon on the heels of the animals, getting them once more into some semblance of control.

But the curse of the trail and the despair of the packer is the muskeg, the Indian name for swamp. Old boys who have pushed through the worst stretches of wilderness between the Atlantic and the Pacific give an involuntary shudder at the mention of the word "muskeg." I myself have had and seen some stirring incidents



THE PACK-TRAIN THREADING THE FOOT-HILLS OF THE ROCKIES THROUGH THE LOW-LYING MORASSES
FRINGING THE ATHABASKA RIVER.

The "bell-boy," or leader, picks up the trail, the horses following in a single file.



grappling with this enemy. More often than not the situation is complicated by the presence of a creek, springs, or a large, deep pool of unseen, stagnant water. Superficially the saturated accumulation of decayed vegetable matter looks as sound as a brick pavement, as, indeed, it is as a rule to human feet ; but when the pack-horse ventures forward, its legs descend into the mass like sticks, and it is not long before it has sunk up to its girth. Then it lunges out desperately in all directions in the effort to free itself from the sticky, glutinous mud, but every struggle only causes the animal to be sucked deeper into its unsavoury couch. The pack on its back hampers its movements, and, being a dead weight, seems to press the animal irresistibly into the greedy morass.

When a horse becomes stalled in the muskeg, lively times are expected. The packers rush forward, often knee deep. The packs are torn off hastily and tossed on one side. The absorbing question is to save the animal from exhaustion and suffocation. Ropes are lassoed round its head, and while, perhaps, a couple tug desperately, another pushes might and main on the animal's flanks. The brute endeavours to assist its rescuers, but the wicked sucking, squelching of the slime betrays the fact that the muskeg is determined not to let its victim escape without extreme effort. The mud flies in all directions, but the packers close their eyes, and hang on like grim death. If the horse can be got into an upright position, those who are pushing slip their shoulders under the flanks, and strain desperately to prise the animal up. If it is wellnigh exhausted, a sharp eye has to be kept open to spring clear when the animal relapses back, and a breather is taken for the next attempt. Even when the creature falls from sheer exhaustion, and cannot assist its helpers, the rescue is not abandoned. All the men haul on to the neck-rope in the endeavour to pull

the animal out of the hole by sheer physical force. So tightly does the slime grip that, when at last the animal is hauled clear, the last spurt often sends the packers sprawling into the slough. But one and all scrape as much mud from their faces as they can, vault into their saddles, and jaunt along merrily in expectation of the next excitement, allowing the heat of the sun to dry their clothes, from which the mud is removed more or less, later in the day.

The packer's life teems with excitement and adventure, and no other vocation ever would appeal to these happy-go-lucky spirits. No two days are alike in their existence. Even when the rain is pelting down, lashing the face like a whip, and drenching the clothes, they jog along whistling and humming in perfect complacency. When the camping-ground is reached, a roaring fire is built up, and, standing around, they dry themselves in its welcome heat, their forms enveloped in a sissing steam bath. Then they turn into their blankets, which perhaps are reeking with water, but they are soon in the arms of Morpheus, and far more comfortable than the city man, buried beneath snow-white linen upon a feather bed.

Is the occupation well paid? That depends from what standpoint the calling is viewed. It does not build up millionaires, although many prosperous merchants of Canada to-day can recall the days when they followed it, and thus secured the urgent dollars to lay the foundations of a fortune. The pay varies from 6s. 0d. to 8s. 0d. (or more) a day the whole time the packer is on the trail. This does not seem a princely wage, considering the conditions of life and the arduous nature of the work, but this is in addition to living, and there are no personal expenses when trailing. Often a journey will last for a couple of months, so that when the packer returns home he has from £18 to £24 clear awaiting him. Seeing

that the pack-train can only be called into requisition while the country is open, and that the demand during that period is greater than the supply, the packer has straightforward, steady employment for seven or eight months, during which time he can make from £63 to £100 clear.

Several of the thrifty boys have become firmly established financially at this work. One I met stuck steadily at it for three years, and at the end of that time found himself possessed of a bank balance of £200. He resolved to start business on his own account, and, settling down in one of the smaller towns, opened a general store. It proved a good investment, but, unfortunately for him, he could not shake off the call of the wilds, so he placed a manager in charge of the business. The summer months he spent along the trail, and the winter he put in at his store. He confessed that he was making a good thing of the dual occupations; the trail brought him in a steady £100 a year clear, while the store contributed another £200 to £300 per annum.

In another instance I ran up against a young farmer. He was firmly established upon his 160 acres, and was "making good" at mixed farming. He was from the southern English counties, emigrated several years ago, could not fit himself in a suitable niche of employment in Eastern Canada, so as a new-comer beat the train to the West, or, in other words, stole transportation by riding in freight cars, and on the roof of the expresses, with his arms cuddled round the pipe from the cooking-stove within to keep himself warm at night. He reached the West considerably the worse for wear, and without a dollar in his pocket, was taken on a pack-train, soon acquired the details of the business, made £80 during the first summer, and cleared up another £40 during the winter, all of which he husbanded. Three years of this

life gave him the wherewithal to settle upon the land, and when asked what his present position was worth, briefly replied, "About £5,000." There was only one worry on his mind, but that was trivial. "I owe the railway company for the rides I sneaked to get out here, but I guess, as they have had me over transporting my produce, we are about quits now."

The daily round is certainly strenuous. The average progress is about fifteen to twenty miles per day, according to the distances the camping-grounds are apart. The packers pull out of camp about seven in the morning, and keep going steadily until they reach the next camping-ground, which is selected for abundance of feed for the horses, and the close proximity of water and wood for themselves. Reaching camp, the horses are relieved of their packs and are turned adrift in the bush to wander and graze in search of food and rest as they please. The packs are piled in a heap, protected with a canvas sheet or fly; the camp fire is built up, and the preparation for the meal hurried forward, as seven hours in the saddle provoke a tremendous appetite.

Dinner discussed, the time is whiled away as the packer inclines. So far as the food is concerned, there is little anxiety. The packer is a more or less accomplished cook—certainly sufficiently so to meet the requirements of the trail, with pork and beans, fried bacon, boiled rice or dried fruits, oatmeal or mush, as maize porridge is called, in the morning, and bannock, with tea as a beverage. None of these dishes takes long to prepare, and their monotony is relieved under favourable circumstances by tinned fruits and jams.

The packer's couch is a rough blanket or two—those thrown over the horses' backs beneath the pack-saddles suffice—laid on the ground before the fire under a canvas fly or else a small A tent. The packer turns into the



PACK-TRAIN WITH PRIVATE PARTY FORDING TYPICAL CANADIAN WATERWAY.

blankets without troubling to disrobe himself, especially if wet—I myself have not taken off my clothes for weeks at a time—soon after darkness has settled upon the land, and the exertions of the day generally are sufficient to insure a sound night's rest.

Shortly after the sun has kissed the dew-laden bush the packer is astir to hustle his horses into camp. This is the most arduous part of the day's work, to my way of thinking. The horses having been turned adrift overnight, have wandered all over the face of the earth in search of food and rest. If the feed is good, perhaps they are within a mile or two of the camp's precincts ; otherwise they may be miles away. At all events, the result is the same. The packer has got to find them and to round them up. Some animals appear to be possessed of a peculiar roaming instinct, and these are always a source of anxiety.

The packer, in his sweater and trousers, and with a bridle thrown over his shoulder, tramps off through the soaking wet bush to pick up the trails of the creatures. It is simply a blind drive through the dense undergrowth, with the branches whipping the face and saturating the clothes, until a track is picked up, and this is followed until the tinkling of the bells around the horses' necks betrays the fact that they are close at hand. Some old warriors of the trail are very canny, however. They can hear the packer trudging through the bush, and, realizing the import of his approach, they draw under cover and stand as still as mutes, permitting him to go blundering on without observing his quarry. Then, when he is some distance beyond, they scamper off in the opposite direction. These wily animals are anathema to the packer. When the morning is wet, rain is falling heavily, and the going is broken and hard to him on foot, he curses equine wiliness in no uncertain manner. Then, again, no little

skill is required to determine the latest track, as the animals pass and re-pass a given point several times in the course of the night, leaving a bewildering criss-cross of trails. The tender-foot is nonplussed until he can read the riddle of the bush like the expert, but he buys this knowledge very dearly.

When one animal is caught, the rest is fairly easy, as the packer now has a means of covering the ground with less personal effort and fatigue. Still, it is no unusual circumstance for the horses to spread themselves over twenty square miles of country in the course of a night.

The return to camp is always exciting. A few faint halloos are heard from the distant bush, interspersed with excited neighings and a wild jangle of bells. Presently there is a commotion in the growth. "Here they come!" shout the boys in camp, and every one starts up to assume a commanding position around the corral which has been improvised by passing ropes from tree to tree, making a small enclosure. The excited equines, throwing their heels into the air in mad glee, and with the rider in mad pursuit, waving his lariat, rush towards the camp as if determined to run one and all down. The waiting boys deliver a startling, wild halloo, the animals swerve, and before they realize the fact are within the corral. Then the animals are tethered, and their captors, as hungry as hunters, demolish the crude trail breakfast with great gusto, and in a manner that would frighten a housewife into hysterics.

The matutinal meal finished, there is no pause. Saddles and packs are hauled out and transferred to the backs of the ponies and mules. In the course of an hour the whole train has struck the trail again to settle down to a steady two-miles-an-hour plod towards the next camp.

Why the calling makes such a powerful appeal to the young adventure-seeking youth is because of the romance

with which it is associated. It takes him into new and unknown regions, to see something of which the outer world knows nothing. The average packer revels in this adventure, and often refrains from making the same journey twice, except at long intervals. He prefers the excitement of a new trail. The nomadic existence appeals to the British temperament. Even the bell-boy is to be envied at times when game is to be encountered along the trail, for fur and feather are often met in the bush. A shot from a "22" at a fool-hen, partridge, or grouse, relieves the tedium of the journey, and provides welcome contributions to the stockpot.

Accompanying private parties is a gentlemanly aspect of the packer's existence. The journey may be undertaken purely for pleasure, exploring the resources of a new country in company with a Government official, a mining engineer, or what not. In any event, the life is much the same. The train for the most part moves along leisurely, the distance covered each day is short, and there are frequent spells of three or four days in a camp to break the monotony of taking to the trail every day. It is no uncommon circumstance for such a party to be absent for four or five months, and the packer can expect confidently £50 or £60 when he returns, this sum generally being inflated with substantial gratuities, especially if the journey has proved productive. On such trips the packer is treated as one of the party, participates in the meals, secures ample supplies of tobacco, a wide variety of comestibles, and other little delights. The life is less strenuous than packing freight, which is a distinctly different occupation.

CHAPTER II

PACKING FREIGHT—THE MASTER PACKER—SOME FAMOUS PACK-TRAINS

WHILE the packer enjoys a private expedition into the wilderness once in a while, he regards it rather as a holiday and a relief to his more strenuous daily round of toil. To his mind, the only way to make money at packing is by the conveyance of freight from point to point. The goods are carried at so much per pound, the rate varying according to the distance to be covered and the character of the country traversed.

In this respect the packer makes hay while the sun shines. In the early days of the Klondyke gold rush, the fever-stricken metal-seekers were forced to pay as much as 2s. per pound for the transit of their goods from Skaguay. Even in deserted Bennett to-day houses are standing with furniture rotting in the apartments. These goods and chattels cost from 5d. per pound upwards to bring in, and no one will take them out.

The freight pack-train runs on much the same lines as the tramp steamer, which sets out from its home port and wanders hither and thither about the waters of the globe, picking up merchandise here to be dropped there, and so on, never knowing when the lights of home will be seen again. Similarly the freight pack-train pulls out laden to the utmost with goods for a certain place. Reaching this point, it finds that some freight is waiting to be transported to another centre, and so on. An

empty pack-train is a loss on freighting work, and consequently no load, however uninviting, is refused. Thus it roams to and fro through the wilderness during the summer season, and it is only the approach of the snow from the North which drives it home at last.

This is the class of trade which brings the greatest financial return to the packer. It stands to reason that the less time in which he can cover a certain distance at so much per pound, and the greater the number of remunerative journeys he can make in a season, the higher his financial return at the end of the year. The animals also do not suffer so severely from the strain in packing freight as on private expeditions. In the latter case an assortment of ungainly and bulky packages are carried which often demand delicate handling, and which cannot be divided up equitably as regards weight. On the other hand, with freight no such difficulties are experienced. For instance, suppose a large consignment of flour has to be packed a distance of two or three hundred miles. The commodity is divided into bags, weighing 100 pounds apiece, slung on either side of each horse, the animal's burden being 200 pounds. The load sits evenly upon its back, and neither impedes its progress to the slightest degree nor occasions extreme fatigue. Then, again, from one end of the journey to the other, the packs are never disturbed, whereas on private expeditions each load is opened out at night, and has to be readjusted in the morning.

With freight, loading and unloading every morning and night is a simple, straightforward operation, especially when the apparejo is used, this being a saddle specially designed for pack-train work, on which the loads can be slipped and made fast in a few seconds, as compared with minutes when the wooden pack-saddle is employed. With the apparejo a train of eighty animals

can be loaded up with 16,000 pounds—approximately seven and a half tons—of goods in less time than thirty animals, equipped with the wooden saddle, can be got under way with 6,000 pounds.

At the present time, owing to railway-building activity in Western Canada, the packer is reaping a rich harvest. The survey parties must be kept supplied with provisions and equipment, and pack-trains are continually passing from supply bases to the *câches* with necessaries. As a rule, the railway companies acquire their own animals, disposing of them when the task is finished, and hiring the men. The average wage is about £10 per month, with everything found, and as the personal expenses are trifling and the employment steady and continuous, a thrifty man can rely upon saving £100 per annum without any effort.

The rapidity with which the far North-West is being settled provides the packer with unique opportunities to make money quickly. The enormous fertile tract known as the Peace River Country is attracting the more hardy farmers by hundreds, and, although it is several hundred miles from the Grand Trunk Railway, a steady stream of prairie schooners, teams, and other vehicles are pouring northwards from a variety of points between Edmonton and Edson. La Grande Prairie alone attracted 400 settlers in the course of a single season, although this little patch, 65 miles in length by 25 miles in width, of excellent open land and rich soil, is 350 miles as the crow flies from Edmonton. Mineral searching activity among the Rocky Mountains has been responsible for the despatch of dozens of pack-trains, some with provisions, and others with personal impedimenta for mining engineers.

In New British Columbia the packer is having a busy time, and this will prevail for many years to come. The

pack-trains meet the railway at Ashcroft, or at Quesnel, the Hudson Bay post 315 miles farther north, and radiate to all points of the compass, stretching out as far as Hazleton, 420 miles beyond. Others are now using the latter point as a base, and from there are ploughing through the Kispiox Valley towards the province of Mackenzie on the one hand, and Alberta, viâ the Peace River, on the other. Many years will elapse before this vast tract of territory will be girdled with the grey band of the railway, so the packer is not in immediate danger of being driven from this promising country.

But the energetic young fellow who realizes that Canada is a country where the maxim "Get on or get left" is fought to the bitter end, is not content to remain a mere cog in the machine which drives the train through the bush day after day. He takes up the lowest position as a means to an end, and if he is thrifty and careful, he soon reaches the height of the packer's ambition—he becomes the owner of a train. When first he strikes a trail without a dollar in his pocket, he earns six, eight or more shillings a day steadily. Then he realizes the fact that money can be made more easily and quickly by letting someone else attend to the horseflesh on the expedition than to be in that position himself.

It is not so difficult a task to blossom into a master packer. The first season's work should lay the foundations for the venture. The cost of the ponies is not heavy, ranging on the average from £6 to £10 apiece, if astuteness is displayed when investing. Many private parties, instead of chartering a train of animals, buy the animals outright for their purpose, as it is a cheaper method if one is likely to pass many months in the wilds. When these parties return, they have no further use for the animals, so they sell them for what they will fetch; as they have recouped their initial outlay in the bush. In

the autumn, as a rule, prices run low, because buyers are few and far between, owing to the prospect of the winter's keep. Indeed, I have seen great difficulty experienced in getting rid of horses at any price at the close of the autumn. Likely buyers shrug their shoulders, point to the bright snow-caps on the mountains, and walk away. On the other hand, in the early spring buying is brisk and fancy prices prevail. At one or two points, to my own knowledge, animals that would be difficult to change for a five-pound note in the late autumn have fetched £20 apiece in the spring.

The sharp individual, anxious to become a horse-owner, who has been packing all the summer, accordingly invests his money in horseflesh at the approach of winter. The chances are a hundred to one, if the animals are suitable, that they can find sufficient employment during the period when the Ice King rules over the land to earn their upkeep by freighting with sleighs.

As the disappearance of the snow heralds the packing season, the call for the pack-train develops. No difficulty is experienced in letting out the animals on hire at 4s. per day per head. If the owner is energetic and enterprising, he will take up his stand near the rail-head, from which point the pack-trains push out during the season, this point being the base of supplies. Then he can confidently look forward to a revenue of £30 to £40 from each of his animals by the end of the season. During the summer the animals do not cost him a cent. They graze in the open when on the trail, picking up what sustenance they can obtain, and those who have hired the train are responsible for the welfare of the creatures. Should an accident befall an animal, then the hirer has to recompense the owner, as the former takes all risks.

One owner I know started in quite a small way. When he hit the trail for the first time, his knowledge of

the craft was small, but he soon mastered its intricacies. By bargaining he exchanged the greater part of his season's wages for half a dozen sturdy animals, and, by keeping them going at odd jobs during the winter, he contrived to make them self-supporting, while, as he always accompanied them himself, he increased his banking account steadily. And by the time the spring came round he had a train of ten horses in the pink of condition. With this outfit he could undertake small contracts, which he was able to manage unaided. When he was chartered for bigger undertakings, requiring additional animals, he made terms with other packers who owned one or two horses on the basis of about 3s. 0d. a day per horse, or 10s. 0d. per day for the man and his two animals. On the other hand, he charged his clients 4s. 0d. per day per animal, and 8s. 0d. for the packer, so out of this transaction he made a matter of 4s. 0d. per day. In this manner he increased his possessions until he owned about sixty animals, which were adequate for his purpose. He admitted to me that he could look forward confidently to an income of £3 a day from his animals for a clear eight months during the year. There were no expenses during this period of any description, except perhaps for saddles, bridles, blankets, and such like, but this was a trivial expenditure. During the winter they brought him in £1 per day, on the average, so that his annual income was about £500 clear. The only period when they were not earning anything was for about two months, when they had to be fed at the rate of about £2 per head per month.

One year he had a good stroke of fortune. Thirty animals were chartered by a private party. They went off at the beginning of March, and were not seen again until November, putting in eight months' continuous service on the trail. Having been let at the usual figure

of 4s. 0d. per day per head, this contract brought him in a round £1,200. Such a sum is not cleared every day, but at the same time it is not a rare occurrence. Another party paid him over £600 for the use of a pack-train for three months, in which case, as he had to hire several horses to make up the train, his net return was about £350.

Of course, the man with capital, who can start operations right away as a master packer, stands in a stronger position. He can obtain first-class animals by paying a high price, and with a stroke of luck can look forward to a certain 30 per cent. return upon his outlay, even when allowing $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. depreciation per animal per annum, and assessing five months' inactivity when feeding averages £2 per month per head. As a matter of fact, there are very few packers who will admit that money is made at this branch of human activity, for the simple reason that so fast as they make money they spend it. One packer, a young English fellow who had cleared a good sum as the result of his summer's operations, and who decided to spend the Christmas in England, started off from British Columbia homeward bound. Before he reached Montreal he was poorer by £500, which he lost by gambling on his way across the continent. This is the spirit of the country. The man works hard and long to make money, and then enjoys himself just as strenuously.

A first-class pack-train, however, is a valuable acquisition. It is desirable that the string of animals should be kept as intact as possible, because the brutes soon shake down to their work, chum-up into small parties, while each learns his position in the train, and, what is more, holds it against all comers. If an animal tries to change its place in the procession, lively times ensue. Without the slightest warning the other beasts turn upon the usurper, let fly with their hoofs, and their teeth, make

wild rushes, and drive it into its ordained position in the train. This peculiarity is perhaps manifested to the greatest degree in regard to the leader. He sticks to the bell-boy tightly, and woe betide the horse that tries to deprive him of his position. There is a spirited fight, and no little dexterity is demanded on the part of the packers to restore order, for the leader refuses to be deposed, and spares no effort to retain his place of honour.

Probably the Diamond Ranch train, the fame of which has spread from Los Angeles to the Klondyke, is the finest string of pack animals on the Pacific seaboard. It is owned by a prosperous rancher of the Bulkley Valley, Mr. Barrett, and he has certainly brought it to a high pitch of efficiency. For years this train was engaged in the annual transportation of provisions along the far-flung-out chain of cabins housing the operators of the Yukon telegraph, which links up the Klondyke with London at Ashcroft. This train comprises about 100 animals, the finest specimens of pack-horses and mules it is possible to find. The horses are laden with 200 pounds apiece, while the mule's load is from 250 to 300 pounds, as this animal is the stronger of the two. The telegraph cabins are about thirty miles apart, and each operator has his stores replenished once a year with about 6,000 pounds of provisions of every description.

The trail lies through the length of the country to Hazelton, and the train starts out in early spring from the south, distributing the provisions to a point about halfway between the two extreme terminals of the line. Reaching Hazelton, it loads up once more and pushes on to Cabin 9, about 185 miles north, the trail laying through very heavy and mountainous country, and then retraces its footsteps to Hazelton empty. The whole undertaking occupies roughly seven months. There is no need

to proceed farther north than Cabin 9, as the posts beyond to Dawson City are supplied from other points, and are accessible for the most part by water. In fact, it would be impossible to proceed farther north than this point, as the season is well advanced by the time it is reached. Often the pack-train is hastened south by the approach of snow, and, indeed, it is not uncommon for it to make its way over the bleak Skeena Mountains through the first white fleece of winter.

When camp is pitched, the beasts range up side by side in a semicircle. The pack is removed and piled immediately before the animal, with its apparejo alongside. The animals are then turned loose in the usual manner to browse in the bush. In the morning the packers are out early, rounding up the creatures, and they tear into camp at a brisk gallop. As they come in, each animal takes up its position before its pack, and if one should assume the wrong position, he is soon corrected by the teeth and hoofs of his comrades. There is no need for the packers to stir a hand to guide them; they do it by instinct. Even if a disagreement breaks out among the brutes as to a relative position, the packers do not interfere beyond the ejaculation of a few stentorian curses. Peace does not prevail until the interloper has withdrawn or has been ejected, and has assumed his correct place in the line. The apparejos are hastily placed in position, the packs slung, and as fast as this task is completed the horse drops out and loiters about, until the bell-boy starts off, when it takes up its place in the procession. One often marvels at the instinct of horses at a circus, but the true sagacity of the animal is exemplified most strikingly when a pack-train is preparing to strike the trail.

Another well-known packing character in British Columbia is old Jean Caux "Cataline" and his train. He,



Harry Wrathall.

OLD JEAN CAUX ("CATALINE"), WHO HAS "PACKED" IN NORTHERN
BRITISH COLUMBIA FOR FORTY YEARS.

This photo was taken at the Fifth Cabin of the Government Yukon Telegraph Line.

CATALINE'S PACK-TRAIN ENTERING HAZLETON FOR A LOAD.

likewise, is famous up and down the Pacific coast, and it was over forty years ago that he pushed his way with his train from San Francisco through Oregon and Washington into British Columbia, where he has stayed, tracking to and fro, ever since. Cataline is a character such as is seldom seen. He tells you that he was raised in Catalonia, and as “Cataline” is more tripping than his patronymic, he has been dubbed Cataline, and as Cataline he will be known up and down the trail till he hands in his checks. When I saw him at Hazleton, one could scarcely believe that he was seventy years of age. He was as upright, as alert, and as athletic, as a city man a third of his age, a result due to the trail and the lifelong tracking through the wilds. He spurned the elements completely. Whether it rained as if promising a second deluge, snowed, or the sun blazed down pitilessly from the blue canopy, it was all the same to him. He was out and about in his shirt-sleeves, wearing a hat that was new possibly a decade or two ago, giving orders and slinging 100-pound packs about as if they were ounce weights. Nothing escaped his vigilance. Most of his packers were Chinamen, selected partly because they were cheaper labour, but more particularly on account of their reliability, steadiness, industry, and a natural bred-and-born capacity to stand roughing it under the worst conditions. They differed from the white packer inasmuch as they did not haunt the saloons from morning to night, when one was in sight; but they had one pecadillo, and that was gambling. They would sit for hours playing faro, black-jack, poker, or any other game of chance, preserving absolute equilibrium under the varying changes of good and bad fortune, but invariably stripping the pockets of the white packers.

On the trail they work more like machines than human beings. Now and again there would be an upset

as Cataline disagreed with some operation they were performing, and then a vociferous hubbub would reign for a few seconds, Cataline's excited Spanish blood rising to such a degree as to cause him to drop his broken English and to let fly violent invective in his mother-tongue. The "chink" would retaliate in his own jargon, and the confusion of tongues at Babel could not have been more jarring than a squabble between Cataline and his packers, especially when one of the Canadian comrades joined in, and vociferously urged each wordy combatant to greater effort. The amusing part is that neither understands what the other is saying, so probably no harm is done.

Cataline's methods are in keeping with his character. He sits down to his humble fare in the open air, talking excitedly meanwhile, and at night he disdains tent, fly, or any other covering or convenience for his couch. He pulls out one or two horse blankets, spreads them on the ground, tucks an apparejo under one end to form a pillow, crawls in, and is soon sound asleep under the starlit sky. Often when he awakes in the morning his beard is soddened with dew, rain, or decorated with icicles, as the case may be, according to the vagaries of the weather, but such trifles pass unheeded. When the pack-train moves off, he gives a spring which would startle many a younger man, and is astride his tall saddle-horse, shouting stentorian orders, as upright as a lath, and as quick as a bushranger. Then he falls into the rear of the train and plods along musingly, shouting some greeting to everyone he meets. When Cataline is worried, one never guesses the fact, as he reveals no sight of his thoughts upon his inscrutable face. He accepts delays and hindrances more or less in the spirit of the Land of To-morrow.

When I met him at Hazleton, he was killing time. He had just come in from Cabin 9, as he had won the contract

for delivering the provisions along the Yukon telegraph line. He was fretting to return south, as winter was approaching. He had no wish to be caught on the southward jaunt by the icy grip of old Boreas with his fleecy mantle, for there were horses worth £2,000 at stake. But he could not go south yet. The Hudson Bay Company had 12,000 pounds of assorted articles to be taken through the Babine Mountains to the trading-post, thirty-six miles east. It was not a long journey as trails go, but it was one of exceptional arduousness, as the path lay over the mountains and across the watershed feeding the Skeena River on the northern, and Babine Lake on the southern, side. Furthermore, it was treacherous going, as the trail was littered with rock, dead, fallen wood, and mud-holes, so that less than twelve miles a day could be notched. Five days out and five days back was the schedule, and it could not be curtailed safely with the load he had aboard.

There was good reason for Cataline's anxiety. According to the riddle of the trail, it was not safe to attempt to reach the Babine post from Hazelton after September 15, and here it was two days over the limit. Every morning Cataline, when he rose from his open-air couch, cast his eyes anxiously toward the Skeena Mountains to see if further snow had fallen during the night. I had come up from the south, and, having passed within sight of the Babine Range, he inquired if I had seen any new snow down yet. Considering that a few days before we had been caught in a light snowstorm in the valley, it was not surprising that the white mantle was travelling lower and lower from the peaks down the mountain slopes, while its brilliant whiteness testified to the fact that it was a recent garb. Cataline's five tons odd of freight were among the worst to be handled by a pack-train at that time of the year. There were cooking-

ranges packed in ungainly sections, piles of soft goods, pots and pans, as well as foodstuffs of all descriptions. He had been held up because some of his horses had wandered off in the bush. The Chinamen searched from morning to night for three days, but found no trace of the wanderers. At last the old packer could wait no longer. He pushed off with the animals he had rounded up, and left one of the packers behind, with strict injunctions to find the missing beasts at all hazards, and to have them to hand by the time he returned, ten days later, so that they could push south without further delay. The Indians were urged to participate in the search by the offer of rewards, and the opinion was ventured among the white men of Hazleton that so soon as Cataline was clear of the town the missing animals would be found, as the Indian is expert in corralling pack-horses in the expectancy of a remuneration. When the dollars are put up, it is astonishing how quickly lost animals can be restored.

As may be supposed, a packer like Cataline, who has been knocking about the wildest wilderness for close upon half a century, can relate stories of the trail innumerable. Some of these reminiscences afford grim reading, and bring home the trials and tribulations of the task very vividly. He had a tough tussle to get into the Babines one year. He was late in starting, and about halfway on the outward journey, where the rock is the most slippery, and the road the steepest and most broken, a blizzard burst upon him. For two days the train struggled with this implacable enemy, plunging blindly forward, the men unable to see farther than a pack-horse ahead. It was no use to camp in the hope that the blizzard would lift up, as there was the danger of being snowed in, and the post was waiting for the goods strapped to the animals' backs. By toiling along afoot, guiding the horses as best they

could, suffering many falls and bruises against the obstacles littering the trail, they emerged from the snow zone on to the lower levels, and gained the post in safety.

The outlook was far from alluring. The pack-train had to make Hazleton again, and then had a dreary 420-mile drag southwards. There was every indication that winter was arriving before its usual time. The question was : Could they race the snow to the south ? Cataline determined to make a struggle to that end, at all events. Directly the packs were stripped, the train retraced its tracks. All went well for the first two days, when, as they were crawling over the summit of the watershed, the Snow King swept down once more with greater fury, as if bent upon the destruction of the little band. The horses were scattered, and the men could not distinguish the equine forms from brush, owing to the whirling, skirling flakes. For forty-eight hours the packers fought the storm, never resting a minute for food. Their one thought was the safety of the animals, and the resistance of the humans was equal to the ferocity of the attacks of the allied forces of the Snow King and Boreas. Their pluck was rewarded. The blizzard, as if defeated, held up, and the pack-train straggled into the town.

Cataline realized that he had a desperate 420 miles in front of him, but, as he had weathered many a disaster in the wilds, he determined to make the risky journey. With all speed the horses were packed, and they struck the homeward run with grim determination. It was a desperate race against the elements. But the latter were wily. They held off until the pack-train had got a good start, and then bore down with fiendish virulence. Cataline rallied his forces, and the packers, to a man infected with his determination, resolved to drive the horses through. They fought the blinding snow for hour after

hour, and then lost the trail. The hardy old packer, though still infused with plenty of fight, recognized the hopelessness of his position. Drifts were ahead which were deep enough to engulf both men and beast, the trail was obliterated, the cold was intense, and, though they might blunder on, the chances were that they would strike a blind steer, as the *cul-de-sac* in the forests is called. He summoned his fleetest saddle-horse and packer. "Ride back and say that there is no chance of our getting through with our packs."

The rider tore off, fighting his way foot by foot through the billows of snow which strewed his path. He rode into the post with his horse steaming, and related how the pack-train was stalled and in jeopardy. There was no alternative. The train must return, and those waiting for the goods on the horses' backs must go without. The rider sped back through the piling drift, and Cataline, marshalling his pack together, with great difficulty returned to the town. It was a sore retreat to him; 17,000 pounds of freight were astride the backs of his train. This represented a solid £130 in cash. But it was not worth while to risk the safety of the animals for this sum of money. So he jogged into the town rather disconsolately, his train knocked about sadly, and shed the precious cargo. Then he turned his course southwards once more. Now that his animals were travelling light he cared little for the elements. They were overwhelmed with blizzards, but they drove their way through, and, somewhat emaciated and weary, the beasts made the home port safely. The pack-train was safe, but its owner was poorer by over £100. Such a loss in the pack-train business is not to be made up again very easily.

The first year Cataline took over the Yukon telegraph supply contract adversity hit him hard, and he came off

somewhat badly in the encounter. That is the worst of Fortune in the wilds : she hits with an iron fist, and every blow gets home. His animals were laden to their utmost capacity. The Government had undertaken to clear the way for his team, but the winter had been hard and spiteful. The creeks were high with the melting snows, and the fierce torrents had carried away the slender timber bridges. Added to this, the wind and snows had brought down trees by the hundred, and the trail was a hopeless tangle of trunks. Every time a bubbling waterway was met time had to be wasted in repairing the bridges, and just how much Cataline spent in this connection no one knows. The Government were quite prepared to dispense £600 in fixing the trail to facilitate his advance, but the clearers were late. At one point Cataline's pack-train was held up for a solid fortnight, his packers working like Trojans to repair a rough log bridge that had been smashed to smithereens by the raging waters. And in a country where the transport season lasts only about eight months a fortnight is a substantial loss. As the old packer related, it was a stern battle every mile of the way, but he gave a grim smile as he added : " Yet we got through." That is the packer's manner. He may be up against it the whole time, but he is only concerned with getting to his destination, which, when reached, provokes chuckles and laughter concerning the trials met on the way.

Cataline has achieved some smart packing performances in his time. On one occasion he packed 18,000 pounds of flour a matter of 250 miles, and transporting some $8\frac{1}{2}$ tons in this manner is no light achievement. On another occasion he carried 12,000 pounds of mixed goods of all descriptions, many articles bulky and awkward to stow on a mule's back, over a similar distance. Considering that the load per animal varies from 250 to

350 pounds, according as to whether the animal is a horse or mule, this performance is by no means to be disdained.

Such is the packer's life. He is one of the heroes of the wilds, keeping the isolated communities going by hook or by crook. He deserves every penny he earns. But the life has a peculiar fascination, and so long as new territories in Canada are opened up, so long will the packer continue to ply his adventurous and exciting calling.



MULE PACKED WITH LOAD OF 300 POUNDS SLUNG ON THE APAREJJO.

Harry Wrathall.



CHAPTER III

FREIGHTERS AND FREIGHTING

NOTWITHSTANDING that the pack-horse is indispensable, the moment a wide road is driven through the bush, the packer is superseded by his heavier and bulkier rival, the freighter. He is practically the carrier of the wilds. In the past he has been eminently successful in Western Canada. His position has been somewhat autocratic, his charges high, and his work tolerably easy. To-day he is suffering from bitter competition, the day is hard and long, and the prices for the most part rule low, except in the more remote outlying places.

In the good old Canadian days, when animals for haulage were scarce, the demand for waggons was greater than the supply. Accordingly, rising communities in the bush were entirely at the mercy of the freighter, and provisions were forced to famine prices owing to his extortionate methods. It cost more to defray the carriage on articles than their actual value; foodstuffs were from 300 to 500 per cent. above the prevailing prices in the cities.

At that time freight rates ran up to as much as fifteen pence per pound. This seems a prohibitive figure, but there was no method of bringing about a relief. As the country became more and more settled, the established freighters found that they were in danger of being undermined by independent units. Enterprising individuals, realizing the high profits to be made out of freighting,

unostentatiously acquired a team of horses or oxen and a freight waggon, and, being their own masters, applied for custom by the simple expedient of cutting prices. The established freighters at first were disposed to laugh at this effort to deprive them of their traffic. They had excellent contracts, and the individual freighters were at liberty to pick up what they could here and there, which crumbs were thought to be so scarce as to be insufficient to keep a chip-munk alive.

However, the master freighters received a rude shock as their contracts expired. Their clients displayed no keen desire to renew them on the old terms. B was prepared to carry the goods cheaper, so why could not A ? Once the toppling over of prices commenced, it continued with a run. The number of individual freighters increased alarmingly, until at last freight rates reached a level which was absolutely unremunerative except to the man who only owned a single team and waggon. The freighter who was content to lounge around the saloon, smoking his cigars, while he paid labour to carry out his work disappeared in the upheaval, and his demise passed unmourned.

The competition, however, has not eased in the slightest. The prosperity of the country, the extent of railway building operations, the opening up of new territories, the foundation of new towns at the rate of two or three per week, has developed a healthy, energetic race of teamsters and freighters. Many recall the old times with a sad shake of the head, but they have no time for lamentations, inasmuch as the pace is hot, owing to the more agile, shrewder, and enterprising young men who are entering the field, probably only for a time, to enable them to obtain a financial foothold for other occupations. These tactics, however, shatter the hopes of the old, grizzled, weather-beaten warriors

of the up-country road, that good times will come back.

The freighter's stock-in-trade is by no means pretentious. A couple of good, strong horses or oxen and a substantial waggon will give him a good start. His capital need not be extensive, as his animals require little fodder during the months when the ground is green. He will require the assistance of another pair of hands, and in order to get the utmost from this system two kindred hard-working spirits will often co-operate. A small supply of provisions must be laid in to carry them over their journey, with perhaps a bale or two of hay for their stock in case of emergencies, but that is about all.

The most promising field of activity for general freighting is in the vicinity of railway-building operations, such as, for instance, the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The contractors attack the undertaking from a hundred or so points at once, scattering their camps about two miles apart, and driving the grade right and left from these points simultaneously until the respective links meet and are joined up.

These camps may stretch over a distance of 100 or 150 miles ahead of the end of steel, as the temporary limit of the locomotive's advance is called. Consequently every ounce of material for feeding and clothing the men, as well as for building the lines, has to be sent in by road.

This is the freighter's opportunity. A rate is fixed for the conveyance of all material from the end of steel to the camps or building sites ahead. The rate may be so much per load in the case of bulky constructional material like baulks of timber; or with varied assorted articles, such as foodstuffs and other necessities, it is so much per pound, the terms varying according to the distance to be traversed. In one particular case the supplies had to be shipped in by waggon for 107 miles, and the rate was

10 cents, or roughly 5d., per pound. By averaging about fifteen miles per day, the teamster could cover the journey, if the fates were kind, in a week ; but then he had an empty jaunt back, so that the fortnight's expedition was not particularly profitable. Yet by working hard, and keeping on the trail from the first streaks of dawn to the longest shadows of dusk, he might scrape out £6 per week, from which he had to deduct his expenses for provisions on the way.

So far as the round trip rate is concerned, this is about equal in its profitable results. A lofty timber trestle was being erected for the railway twenty-two miles beyond the railhead, and all pressure was being centred upon this work, so that it might be completed by the time the nose of steel had crept forward with its locomotive and trains to that point. The timber baulks were massive pieces of lumber cut from the tallest forests of British Columbia, many running up to 60 feet in length. Some of the waggons were able to carry two baulks at a time ; others had to be content with one, owing to its length and weight. The price paid for hauling in the load from the end of steel to the site of erection was £3. For this sum the teamster had got to drive forty-four miles, the homeward journey being made empty. If the roads were in a clean condition and the weather kept fine, the round trip could be made under three days, so the freighter could get in two, or at a tight squeeze three, loads per week. One hustling young teamster supplied me with the information that he was clearing up £4 per week clear. This entailed working practically sixteen out of the twenty-four hours, required a first-class assistant, fine powerful horses, a good waggon, and an aptitude for getting through the mud-holes with which the road abounded.

I had one taste of freighting. Material was being rushed

ahead for the Rocky Mountains section of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The waggon was a rickety structure, slung on four wheels. A couple of excellent horses were hitched to the shafts, and they seemed to possess enough strength to pull the waggon in twain. Still, the fabric kept together, although I have half an impression that this was due to the baulks of timber aboard being lashed so tightly to the respective axles, that the latter could not very well fall apart. The teamster was a young fellow from London, who had been associated with the horse-omnibus, or some other duty which brought him into touch with horses, and for which he had received the scarcely handsome salary of some 25s. per week. Realizing that the fate of the metropolitan horse was sealed by the motor vehicle, he had wisely refrained from trying to seek another job in the Great City, and with his little savings he had taken a steerage passage to Canada, and landed with the proverbial immigration allowance in his pocket. He had drifted farther and farther west, until he had run up against the railway construction armies. He got a job at once at 8s. a day all found, at freighting, and soon learned the ropes of the game. His knowledge of horses stood him somewhat in good stead, and the character of the work, affording no time to think or to get home-sick, appealed to him. As he tersely put it, "When yer wasn't drivin' yer was sleepin', and when yer wasn't sleepin' yer was drivin', and when yer wasn't doin' neither, yer was up to the waist in muskeg, givin' the horses a lift at the wheel with yer shoulder."

His life was typical of the freighters, whether you find them on the railway grade, in the east or the west of the country. Sunday was as a blank day. It gave the horses a much needed rest, allowed the teamster to sleep off the balance of hours necessary to keep the human

engine going, which he had lost in the previous six days' toil. The train came in with its letters. He had the only chance in the week to write home, could complete his laundry operations, darn and mend, wash and brush up, and change his underclothing, these latter tasks being intended to last round till the following Sunday, as the clothes were not taken off during the ensuing week. If the waggon required any repairs, this was the time to do it, unless he wanted to lose some precious hours and dollars on the road. By the time these various duties were completed, darkness had fallen, and it was time to turn into the bunk, likewise for the last occasion until the following Sunday came round, to get another good rest before commencing a grinding week.

By six o'clock on the Monday morning the waggon commenced its rush over the road with a fifty-foot stick of timber aboard. But it was not a case of sitting up on the driving-seat with the reins dangling idly in the hands and the head nodding while the horses ambled along at a snail's pace. Every succeeding minute brought a variation; the development of something unexpected. Constant vigilance was demanded. A moment's lapse and the wandering mind was brought back to the backwoods by the rear wheel dropping with a wicked lurch and squelch into a four-foot mud-hole, and nearly throwing him over the side to stick upright head-first in the mud.

With a hop he was off the waggon, and the next moment three feet of him were visible above the viscid, evil-looking water. The horses were kicking and plunging, warping the vehicle to and fro, and only causing it to sink deeper. He waded round the almost submerged wheel, summed up the situation in a few seconds, and then waded out of the mud-hole, catching hold of his axe as he passed the waggon. The next minute he was making the white chips fly as he swung his tool with rapidly measured

strokes against the trunks of some jack pines by the wayside, pulled them over to the mud-hole, and laid them in front of the stranded wheel. Half an hour sped by in this work, the horses meanwhile standing still. Then, prising his feet against one of the buried logs, he bent his back like a bow, and as he yelled out "Git up!" he pulled desperately at the wheel. It moved slowly but steadily. A tree-log rolled beneath it. Catching something firm to grip, the wheel flew out of the mud-hole, smothering the teamster from head to foot. The horses stampeded out of the morass, and when they regained dry land, stood shivering and snorting after their exertion.

The teamster floundered out in their wake, the mud streaming from his waist in a black trail along the ground. Out came a spanner, and soon the wheel cap was lying on the road, while a bunch of grass was cleaning out the mud from the bearing. A blob of equally black grease was jerked in, the axle cap was replaced, the teamster clambered aboard, and once more was jogging along, the mud on his clothes either drying in the sun or being washed off by the rain, according to the mood of the elements.

Mile after mile this round continued. By keeping a sharp eye on the road surface, some of the obstacles could be avoided. Wherever an innocent puddle of water stretched across the highway, the teamster gave his horses a turn with the rein, and urged them to a spring so as to dash headlong through the bush. The vehicle swept sideways, the heavy load aboard giving the crazy-looking vehicle sufficient impetus to tear up and break off young jack pines, and to carry away scrub by the roots. When the bad spot was passed, the vehicle reeled out on to the road again, and a smart lookout was kept for the next trial. It was of no avail anticipating any particular

obstacle, because the unexpected lurked everywhere. The fussing creek appeared as easy to cross as a macadam roadway. Only 2 or 3 inches of water babbled over its pebbly bed. With a whoop the waggon went flying down the declivity, all on board stiffening the limbs to secure a firm hold. The horses dropped into the water, and the waggon made a bounce of 2 or 3 feet, coming down with a tremendous crash and a splash. You expected a healthy jar as the wheels hit the bottom and gave a smart rebound, or the collapse of a wheel under the strain ; but neither happened. Then you thought the wheels must have struck a cushion, but looking over the side you could just see 3 inches of steel rim gleaming above the churned-up water. The horses kept pulling, and the weight aboard kept the vehicle lumbering forward, so that the efforts of the animals enabled the unwieldy mass to gain the opposite bank. Then it stopped ; on dry land it was true, but stalled as completely as if buried in mud. The acclivity was too steep for the horses. Off jumped the teamster, a coil of rope in his hand. He fixed one end to the front of the vehicle, and climbing up the bank, set rope and tackle to a tree stump in the twinkling of an eye.

“Now then, boys !” We all gripped the end of the rope, the horses were urged to supreme effort, and while they tugged and strained, we stuck our heels into the ground and hauled for all we were worth. It came up inches by inches, a breather being taken with every slight advance, until at last, when on the brow, we yanked her over. The best part of an hour was gone in making 50 yards, and that could not be considered a furious pace.

It was a good opportunity to have a little lunch. The horses were uncoupled and turned adrift in the bush to get something to eat. A fire was lighted quickly, water was soon boiling, and a steaming cup of tea was



FREIGHTING WITH SLEIGHS IN WINTER.

so irresistibly fascinating, that they break away from civilization for a time, and wander around the scenes of their former struggles, fraternizing round the camp fires and exchanging stories with the new men in the fields where they won their spurs.

Yet freighting is not entirely the dog's life that it seems upon the railway grade. That reveals the calling in its most forceful phase. The other side of the picture is revealed on such journeys as the Peace River trek, the discovery of the gold mines around Porcupine in Ontario, on the Cariboo Road in British Columbia, or way down among the spurs being driven by the Canadian Pacific Railway. As the Grand Trunk Pacific approached New British Columbia's fertile plateau, settlers rushed into "The New Garden of Canada" from all parts. The great highway was from Ashcroft on the Canadian Pacific Railway northwards to a point known as Soda Creek on the Fraser River, or to Quesnel. From the latter point extends an excellent frontier road following the Yukon telegraph line. Soda Creek is the point whence the steamboats run up the Fraser River to Fort George, as well as the higher reaches of the Nechaco and Stuart Rivers. Directly the country was opened, an important town was created at Fort George. Although the nearest railway-station was 318 miles to the south, people rushed northwards by the hundred, many falling foul of the hopeless transportation conditions at the time, to return southwards, wiser in knowledge, but poorer in pocket.

Everything from food to clothes, tools to materials, and general supplies, had to be brought up overland, and the result was that no one could live in Fort George unless he had savings or the means of existence. Flour cost more in Fort George than it did in Dawson City. To transport this commodity from Ashcroft to the budding metropolis cost 2½d. per pound. Of this total the steam-

tinguished with a can of water, the waggon had got into its stride once more.

This was the round day after day, for six days in the week, with no longer pauses than were absolutely necessary. When the destination was gained, the weighty baulk was whisked off the waggon by a derrick, the team's head was turned, and all were off back again for another load.

I asked this hustling young Londoner how long he thought he would keep up this pace ?

"Well, I'll be going out next year. By then I reckon I'll have got a solid hundred pounds tucked away. I bought this outfit cheap from the fellow I was with. He got sick of the game. I'll do the same. Or I might take the beasts with me. They are two fine pieces of horseflesh. What'll I do ? Heaven alone knows ! But I've heard that freighting's good up on the Peace River and mebbe I'll go up there for a change. I'd like to see that country."

This is characteristic of the new arrival in the West. He stays at one place until he is tired of the scenery and surroundings, and then hies to pastures new. This is his round of existence. Playing football with fortune makes a peculiar appeal, and it must be confessed that wandering from pillar to post in this manner, picking up money all the time, offers an excellent education. Sooner or later some place makes a strong call, and there the wanderer settles down permanently, unless the restless feeling revives temporarily, when the appeal is answered and a brief spell is taken in the wilds just for old time's sake. There are many people in Canada to-day in comfortable circumstances in the cities, having earned a contented position through the gold they struck in the Yukon, or the money they made "mushing" through the wilds. Periodically the old malady grips them, becoming

so irresistibly fascinating, that they break away from civilization for a time, and wander around the scenes of their former struggles, fraternizing round the camp fires and exchanging stories with the new men in the fields where they won their spurs.

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boat claimed one penny for the journey between Soda Creek and Fort George, but the freighters on the Cariboo Road received $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound for carrying goods over 163 miles.

This road is excellently built, and taken on the whole, the freighter's life over this highway is attractive and easy. At intervals of about twenty miles are well-built log houses and stables—stopping-places or bush "hotels"—where an excellent meal can be obtained for 2s. per head, ranging through four or five courses, with bunk sleeping accommodation for the men, and good stabling for the horses. The day's journey is on the average from one stopping-place to another. A freighting enterprise in these days which brings in £14 per ton is not to be disdained in Canada, especially under such first-class travelling conditions. The direct route from Ashcroft to Soda Creek, while constituting the channel for the bulk of the traffic, is only one point to which freight is conveyed. The peoples of Quesnel and Barkerville are entirely dependant upon the freighter for their necessities, and he mulcts them 2d. and 3d. per pound respectively, for the privilege of keeping them alive.

When the New British Columbia boom set in two or three years ago, the freighters who had been lamenting their bad straits in other parts of the country, flocked to Ashcroft. Yet the invasion was not equal to the demand. A string of waggons laden to breaking-point sprawled out over the 163 miles to Soda Creek, and another empty procession was drawn out in the reverse direction. The two streams kept in movement like an endless conveyer belt scooping up the loads at Ashcroft, and disgorging them at Soda Creek. They travelled as hard as they could go, and yet the pioneers at Fort George were condemned to short rations at times. The more energetic freighters who had suffered nothing but losses or merely starvation

pittances out of their toil for years past in the middle west, made good quickly on the Cariboo Road. They regained a near approach to their old time autocracy and independence, since, when the railway company desired its special requirements to be shipped in for the purpose of building the line through the country, and there was every indication that long and remunerative contracts could be obtained, the freighters resumed their avariciousness. The general rate must be maintained, they argued. The railway authorities demurred, and requested special quotations. Seeing that some of the loads ranged individually up to 5 tons or more, but were capable of being handled easily on the well-built road, the prospect of paying £40 for the transport of one article was somewhat startling. The freighters condescended to carry out the work for £10 per ton, but even this figure did not appeal to the railway contractors, so the matter was dropped. The requirements for the railway now are being shipped in from the east over the completed line, and transferred direct to steamboats on the Fraser River. The freighters have lost a golden opportunity to reap a rich harvest through their greed, and the result is that within a few months the traffic on the Cariboo Road will dwindle to its straggling stream of five years ago, for freight will be landed in Fort George at £2 per ton by rail and steamer as compared with the rate of £14 now prevailing.

Other younger and more enterprising freighters, realizing the situation, have pushed beyond the Cariboo Road into the heart of the country, and are establishing themselves firmly for the assistance of the incoming settlers, who are certain to flock in when the railway is completed. One trader told me that at the moment he was paying 5½d. per pound for all articles discharged at his shop and brought up from Ashcroft. What this

rate means to the buyers, when investing in such necessary articles as sugar, soda, soap, and so forth, may be easily realized.

Yet, although the freighter is being driven off the great highways of the bush by the railway, the future is by no means gloomy. The energetic have the opportunity to make good far more easily, quickly, and effectively to-day than yesterday. But they will have to accommodate themselves to the conditions. The Government is driving good roads in all directions to facilitate access to the remote areas. The freighter will have to emerge from his chrysalis state with horse and waggon into one analogous to the British carrier so familiar in our rural districts. Equipped with motor vehicles so as to cover the ground more quickly, he will constitute an excellent feeder to the railway with the certainty of not travelling empty on one journey, but laden to his fullest capacity both out and home. The traction freighter has not yet arrived in Canada. His turn is coming, and the men who have sufficient go-aheadness to keep pace with the wheels of progress, and who will press the commercial motor into service, are those who will score success.

CHAPTER IV

CUTTING TRAILS AND BUILDING ROADS THROUGH THE BUSH

THE frontiersman on his journey of discovery through the wilderness of virgin forest, makes his way as best as he can. He has no compass ; very often he has not even a watch to serve as a makeshift to enable him to pick up his bearings. The heavens constitute his sole guide. Axe or jack-knife in hand, he blazes his way as he goes, so that if a retreat is compulsory by the appearance of some difficult obstacle, he can retrace his footsteps fairly easily and quickly. Otherwise his tracks are wellnigh indiscernible. He crashes through the bush blindly, shielding his face from the whipping lashes of branches with his armed hand, and the undergrowth closes up behind him as waves engulf a wreck. To attempt to follow in his tracks is wellnigh hopeless, as I have found from bitter experience. The blazes on the trees at places are as thick as leaves in summer, and they appear to lead off to all points of the compass. You follow one blazing laboriously, only to find that it is a blind lead to the brink of a ravine. You retrace your footsteps, and, picking up another blazing, trudge off in the opposite direction. That comes to a full stop beside the wicked, impassable rapids of a skeltering river. Back once more to make a third attempt with the same fruitless results. You may have boxed half the compass before you succeed in picking up the only trail leading out of the difficulty, at

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the end of which time many miles have been covered laboriously. Yet you have only wandered faithfully in the footsteps of the frontiersman. He made every one of these abortive journeys, with infinitely more difficulty than you following in his wake, in search for a passage, and naturally blazed his way every time from the central point.

Should that trail become generally used subsequently, the man following it is saved fruitless expeditions. The blind trails are blocked up by throwing trees across them, or by forming a rude barricade of brush, while the true path is blazed more prominently than ever. In course of time, the trail becomes easier to read, as the signs on the trees are seconded by the churned-up ground.

Yet the time that can be lost over blind leads is amazing. Time after time, in making slow progress through the forest, I have been lured away from the true path by a promising side trail, and have only found out the mistake when several miles have been covered to no purpose. The difficulty of picking up a trail becomes somewhat intense when it leads down to the edge of a wide, shallow stream. The bushes on the opposite bank press so closely together, and kiss the water so unbrokenly as to reveal no sign of where the track re-emerges from the creek. Should a path be seen to lead along the bank, it is naturally taken only to come to an abrupt termination. On one occasion no less than six hours were spent in trying to follow a will-o'-the-wisp trail through a swamp. A trail ran through the morass, and we followed it to find ourselves wandering round in circles, and cutting other geometrical designs in 3 feet of stagnant water and towering sugar-cane grass.

When the country beyond has opened up, and the speculators and settlers are surging resistlessly towards the new magnet, a way must be carved through the silent



R. C. W. Lett.

TYPICAL FRONTIER ROAD. THIS HIGHWAY LEADS FROM EDSON INTO THE GRANDE PRAIRIE
AND PEACE RIVER DISTRICTS.

The first trail was a rude path in the centre of the present highway, which was widened when the boom set in to permit the passage of waggons.



dark forest to facilitate their forward movement. First, it is merely a trail, a narrow pathway cleared of trees, and with the brush cut back, just wide enough to permit laden pack-horses to walk in Indian file. So far as the surface of the ground is concerned, the beasts must beat it down with their own feet. When the trail lies over high ground, the going is generally easy, but when it swings down into depressions and dales in which the water drains, then the feet of the creatures generally succeed in churning the mass into quagmires and mud-holes, in which it is not a difficult matter to sink up to the waist in the stickiest slime found outside a liquid glue factory.

Cutting the trail is the first task in the opening-up of a new territory. In the early days, when the Hudson Bay Trading Company became established in the country, they drove their own trails from post to post, and these have since proved invaluable highways through territory in which the company carries out its operations. But for every mile which this company has driven through the wilderness, twenty miles of new trails have had to be cut, and this, when there are no Indian tracks to assist in the enterprise, is heart-rending work. The cutting gang generally comprises devil-may-care young fellows, or sourdoughs willing to earn from 8s. to 20s. or more a day, according to the situation of the country to be traversed. They sally out with a small pack-train laden with provisions, tents, and other necessities. Their tools comprise for the most part axes, large jack-knives, with edges as keen as razors, and coils of rope. As they advance somewhat quickly through the country, they are lightly equipped to facilitate progress, provisions being sent in periodically, and c  ched at frequent intervals, from which immediate supplies are drawn as required.

It seems a simple calling where there is no demand for

any particular skill. This may be the case, but, on the other hand, the work is hard, the life is exceedingly rough, and there is always the risk of accident. The majority of men who have taken one turn at trail-cutting generally make a vow to avoid it in future, as the loneliness of the forest, the monotony of the daily round, and the silence that can be felt, knocks all the sense out of the tenderfoot. On the other hand, there are many individuals who prefer this type of labour. It is out of doors, healthy, and full of excitement, especially when the bush is well-filled with game and there is the likelihood of meeting some spirited encounters with bears. As a means of drilling the raw material into the ways of the wilds, it would be difficult to excel. The tenderfoot is brought up against it at every turn, and the difficulties, piling up on one another with startling frequency, bring out the man's temperament to an acute degree. It gives him such a taste of the bush as to make or mar his future in the West. If he goes under, he returns to the city with his air-castles of romance and glory shattered like glass.

In British Columbia the majority of the roads have been built from a gold rush. When the wonderful news of rich strikes in the Cariboo country filtered through in the 'sixties of the last century, gold-seekers, human vultures, gamblers, and speculators pushed northwards. The prospect confronting them was even worse than that in the Klondyke half a century later. There were no railways in the country. The fever-stricken pushed their way up the Fraser River from Vancouver as far as Hope or Yale, and there had to leave the waterway as the endless string of canyons loomed directly ahead. From that point they had to proceed as best they could, and how many went under in the ordeal no one knows. They had to wind along the brinks of the terrible, deep cracks

in the mountains, through which the river thunders, climbing up and down steep cliffs hand over hand, in the manner of the Indians, many slipping and breaking their necks in the process. At last the Government came to the rescue. A waggon road was built from Hope into the heart of the Cariboo country. It was a gigantic undertaking, stretching for several hundred miles. The grades were terrific, and at places the pathway was hewn out of the face of the cliff a thousand feet above the foaming waters below. A slip over the edge, and there was a straight headlong dive into the river. As one rolls through these gorges in the cars of the Canadian Pacific Railway, one may catch glimpses of this pioneer road perched on the sky-line above.

In a way this road was useless expenditure, for shortly after it was completed, the gold strike petered out, and the Cariboo became little more than a memory. During the past few years, however, its last lap of 150 miles, extending northwards from Ashcroft on the Canadian Pacific Railway, has resumed a touch of its former activity and bustle. The stage-coach, motor-car, pack-horses, and freight waggons, jostle and hustle one another on its surface from morning to night, because the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway is being built through the heart of the country to the north, where the wonderful agricultural riches of New British Columbia have been revealed. Farmers, speculators, traders, and a host of other pioneering spirits are surging forward to be in on the ground floor, disputing the passage along the highway with the lumbering waggons taking in provisions and necessities not only for the new railway, but also for the numerous communities rising up like mushrooms throughout the length and breadth of this wonderful mountain-locked, fertile plateau.

When Skookum Jim, the Siwash, and his colleague,

Dawson Charley, discovered the glorious Klondyke, and the wealth of their discovery hypnotized the whole world, causing hundreds of gold-seekers from every country between the two Poles to hurry to Skaguay, to reach the Bonanza, where gold was to be picked merely for the stooping; as they thought in their mad delirium, the thousands of early arrivals trailed over the Chilkoot Pass. The ranks were so dense that the gold-seekers became a vibrating, heaving mass of humanity standing out black, like an ugly gash, against the white background of snow, packed so closely together as to tread almost upon one another's heels, and moving forward with mechanical precision and slow, rhythmic speed. The trail was so narrow that two men could not walk abreast, and if one dropped out from exhaustion, those around him could not pause to render aid, as they were pressed forward relentlessly from behind. The speed of movement was governed by the pace of the leading seekers. If they spurted forward, the whole line quickened its pace; if they lagged from fatigue, there was an accompanying diminution in speed behind. The fresh spirits at the tail, fuming at the slow pace, and anxious to press forward, had to curb their impetuosity. To venture from the confines of the footprints winding up over the hump was to court disaster; to leave another batch of bones to bleach in the following summer's sun.

The law of the Klondyke trail was harsh, but it is a country where kid glove methods were impossible, especially in those days. Horses were pressed freely into service, being purchased at prohibitive figures at Skaguay, and were always laden to well above the "Plimsoll" mark of the trail. The animals surged forward. They could not pause for a breather on the steepest slopes, but had to keep going somehow. When a beast dropped down from sheer exhaustion, it had to be got on its feet at once, or

it was lost. The line behind pulled up if it could, and the man was given just enough time to slip the packs from his horse and no more. If he fumbled on the task or took too long, he was swept out of the way, and the procession moved on. The chances were a thousand to one that the man who had fallen never reached the Klondyke. The gold-seekers passed him without a thought of pity, deaf to his entreaties, and blind to his struggles. Sympathy was wasted. Those who pushed on while he writhed in the agonies of death never knew whether their turn might not come next. At one point, where the trail was particularly wicked, and where the horses fell down by the score, it wound round the edge of a fearful ravine. It became so littered with the bones and corpses of the fallen animals, that the spot received the lugubrious nickname of "Dead Horse Gulch," by which it is known to this day, and serves to recall the memories, the excitement, the castles in the air, and the blasted hopes and miseries of the Yukon fifteen years ago.

When the rush was at its height, Captain Moore, an old pioneer who had navigated the waters of the Stickine for more years than he could remember, sought for another entrance to the goldfields from the coast. He knew that the Indians were following an easier route, and questioned them closely, but they were astute. They were making money at the expense of the gold-seekers. They were packing goods and supplies into the Klondyke on their backs for the miners. With their loads they scurried out of Skaguay, and were not seen again until they arrived at the Golden City. Where they traversed the mountains no one knew, and the white men were not sufficiently daring to attempt to track them, as the Indian reads the forest like a book, and never gets lost, while the white man was liable to get stranded, and to be played out before he had gone two score miles. Captain Moore

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knew the Chilkoot Pass through and through, having traversed the country long before gold was discovered, but he was bent on discovering the red men's secret, as he was convinced that it was better than the Chilkoot Pass. The red men hesitated to betray their path, because they feared that the white man would come along with his pack-trains, and put them out of business.

Not to be discouraged, Captain Moore started off, and trailed over the mountains, following in the tracks of the Indians, which he picked up quite easily, and the White Pass route was found. Then he sailed south to Victoria, and unfolded his plans to a Development Company. This organization lost no time in profiting by the discovery. Men were enrolled, and with pack-horses bearing provisions and tools, they hacked a way from Skaguay to Lake Bennett. The trail-cutters made money out of the transaction, as wages ruled high, some of the boys netting a comfortable 16s. per day, with everything found, during the short Northern summer. It was a trail in the fullest sense of the word, being a mere clearing about 2 feet wide, through the bush, with corduroys, or logbridges, over the mud-holes, and stones thrown into the beds of creeks or rivulets through which the pack-trains splashed their upward way.

Directly this trail was opened a rush set in. The fact that the White Pass was easier than the fearful Chilkoot, with its blood-freezing winds, was noised far and wide. The volume of traffic was tremendous, and, as may be supposed, owing to the trail having been cut very rapidly, it broke down. Horses floundered in the morass, breaking limbs and irrevocably damaging packs; men slipped down steep slopes to pull up with broken necks at the bottom of rifts; and the contents of packages were scattered in all directions against tree stumps and boulders. The trail became a churned-up mass of mud,

stones, and falls of dead wood, and many pack-trains were held up for hours while the process of fixing was carried out, to enable the animals to go forward. Yet, despite these drawbacks, over 3,000 miners wrestled with the difficulties during the first season the trail was open, in their mad haste to gain the coloured creeks and waters of the Yukon. The Chilkoot Pass slipped from favour, and only the most daring ventured to scale its summit. And to-day even the White Pass trail is only a haunting memory. The iron horse has entered the country under British enterprise, and carries the miners and their belongings to and fro quickly and in comfort.

Although the building of the railway wiped out the hazardous track over the mountains, it comes to a dead stop at White Horse, and from this point there extends a "road" to Dawson City, over which the Royal Mail is carried during the winter to the isolated city on Parallel 64°. It is a busy highway, too, for the traffic has increased so much that the dog-sleds which formerly sufficed to carry the letters to and fro, are now replaced by horse-drawn vehicles.

Yet it is a wicked road. It exists for the most part in imagination. For sixty-five miles it extends over an upper layer of moss and decayed vegetation resting on subterranean springs and lagoons. It is as soft as a half-cooled jelly, and everything sinks as easily into it as if it were quicksand. It can only be used by the mail for a few months in the year, when the boggy mass is frozen as hard as a rock to a depth of several feet, and there is a good layer of snow on top to form an excellent surface for the sleighs. The grades are back-breaking, and the devastation wrought by wash-outs has caused the road to be built several times over. It cost the Canadian Government a solid £5,000 to run those sixty-five miles, if just merely clearing away the brush over a certain

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width, easing banks, and corduroying the worst patches may be termed building a road, and the men engaged in the task had one of the stiffest fights against Nature that has ever been accomplished.

But probably the worst trail ever carried out in the annals of Canadian history was that from Edmonton overland to the Klondyke. It involved one of the hardest journeys on record, tracing a way through unknown country for hundreds of miles. Private initiative shrank from the perils ; men willing to risk their lives and limbs in cleaving a 2-foot way for the passage of gold-fever stricken fools were not to be found at any wage. So the task fell upon the North-West Mounted Police. This famous corps has achieved many brilliant exploits, but the cutting of the Klondyke trail stands out pre-eminent. One of my companions on the trail had assisted in that undertaking, and had vowed that never more would he be seen swinging an axe to cut a way through the virgin forest for any pack-train on this earth. It was a nightmare from start to finish, and the only wonder is that the task was ever completed. When the police set out, it was hoped that they would be assisted by the Indians, but the country traversed proved to be as void of human life as the ice fields around the poles. The monotony and silence nearly drove the trail-cutters mad. Only at very rare intervals did they see a face outside the members of their own party—when the pack-train came up with provisions. Accidents were numerous, but they had to patch up the sufferers as best they could, as there was not a doctor within 2,000 miles. On one occasion, while one of the party was swinging his axe to bring down a spruce, his numbed fingers played him false. The razor-edge missed the trunk and pulled up short and sharp against his foot, cutting through the leather boot as if it were paper. His limb was cut wellnigh in half. His





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comrades picked him up, and with the cleanest pieces of rag they could find—dust-laden lining torn from their clothes—they bound up the wound, and staunched the flow of blood. The sufferer grew worse, the loss of blood precipitating what promised to be a fatal illness. He was in need of delicate foods, but they had nothing but the rough trail fare to offer him, comprised for the most part of pork and beans. They dreaded blood-poisoning, but were spared this scourge fortunately, as they persistently washed the wound with pure hot and cold water.

The patient's steel constitution, tempered by the blasts of winter, and the open air, and hard life, pulled him round. In the course of a few weeks, he was about and once he felt his feet he mended rapidly, so that it was not long before he was once more wielding his axe with his companions.

It is not surprising, under these circumstances, that men are difficult to obtain for cutting trails. The wages are high—anything from 8s. to 20s. per day may be earned, with food—but silent Nature very soon bludgeons the trail-cutter back to civilization. Some men seem born to this work, but hacking brush from misty morn to dusky twilight in a very short time plays havoc with a man.

As the new country is opened up, the traffic becomes too heavy for the pack-train. The 2-foot pathway must be widened out to admit of the passage of wheeled vehicles. The road-builder then appears upon the scene. At the present moment the driving of frontier roadways is very active. Both the Dominion, the Provincial, and the British Columbia Governments are laying out considerable sums in this direction. The general practice is to build the road by direct labour, but now and again private enterprise is entrusted with the task. The scale of payment varies according to the country in which the work

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is being carried out, and the characteristics of the employer.

The pioneer or frontier road differs very considerably from that to which the city dweller is accustomed. In comparison it is not a road at all, but merely a swathe through the forest. The standard width is 60 feet, and the first operation is the clearing of the brush and the levelling of the trees within the confines of this band. The scrub is levelled to within a few inches of the ground. The undergrowth and tree stumps cannot break out into fresh growth as the passing traffic kicks the life out of them. When the swathe has been driven from point to point, the grading commences. The tree stumps are pulled out in much the same perfunctory manner as a dentist removes offending molars, banks have the humps scraped off by machines hauled by horses so as to reduce the gradients to facilitate the passage of waggons, while creeks and rivers are bridged or equipped with current ferries. The backwoods bridge is a crude, cheap structure, though extremely serviceable. Long strong logs are laid athwart the waterway, so that the ends rest on either bank. Upon this foundation other logs, sawn to the right length, are laid crosswise and close together. Then two other long logs are laid on either side parallel to the foundation, and immediately above, with the ends of the cross-pieces between. The whole fabric is clinched together by long, wooden, wedge-like pegs, placed at frequent intervals. The road surface is formed by the rounded sides of the logs, which, under the passing traffic, become smoothed off level as if given a flat surface by an adze or plane.

Every spring these bridges have to be overhauled. The creeks, swollen by melting snows, rise, and either lift the structure off its foundations or else break it up more or less, while the logs themselves, forming the deck, suffer

from the ravages of wear and weather. Then the road-way has to be renewed at the end of winter, as it becomes obstructed by the tall thick trees, which have been brought to earth by the wind. Every spring a gang has to go out to fix the primitive highway. As for its surface, this is as Nature left it—the day when the steam-roller and macadam will be required is very remote. The passing wheels of vehicles ram down the ground on either side, and in time carve out deep ruts, so that no difficulty is ever experienced in keeping to the right-of-way, though trouble may be experienced in trying to turn suddenly at right angles. The muskeg is overcome by means of “corduroying”—that is, fashioning a structure similar to that of the log bridge, and laying it upon the surface of the bog.

In New Ontario where the new transcontinental line crosses a 200-mile spur running up from the south, gold was discovered at Porcupine. Instantly the inevitable rush set in. When I was there shortly after the strike, the countryside was littered with goods waiting to go in, but impossible to transport because the trail was so difficult. The Ontario Government came to the rescue, and pouring gangs of men up-country, the forest soon resounded with the savage strokes of the axe, as brawn and muscle cleared the 60-foot wide swathe through the trees for the worst nine miles.

In the West the authorities, realizing the significance of the boom of the Peace River country, have widened out and improved the old execrable trail to a highway, along which a motor-car can rumble so long as it carries rope and tackle to haul itself clear of mud-holes, and is fitted with powerful springs capable of withstanding a mechanical hopping, skipping, and jumping. In New British Columbia roads are being driven in all directions, this Government having embarked upon a very enlight-

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ened and broadminded road-building policy. The most important highway is the 420-mile track running through the length of the country northwards of the Cariboo Road. When we swung off the rock-strewn trail and hit this primitive thoroughfare, we blessed the Government. The pace of the pack-train quickened from two to nearly three and a half miles per hour. Numerous laterals are being built on either side, tapping promising points, so that the settlers, when they surge in during the next two years, will find excellent vehicular canals striking through the bush.

The men met on these frontier road-building operations are of a peculiar type. Many have tried their hands at nearly every occupation, and have struck bad luck at one and all. They could get a better job down in the cities, but they resent the confinement. Some will tell you harrowing stories of the trail in the search for gold, and what an illusion the quest is when the fields are reached. Others have been out prospecting without striking a sign of anything but black sand, which never gave a reflection of colours ; or have been trapping, but the animals could always scent their traps a mile away, and accordingly gave them a wide berth. Some have put their hands to farming, but their crops would not grow ; or at fruit-raising, but the trees appeared to be disgusted with the land in which they were being reared, and died. Some of the younger fraternity are out to get their first experience of the wilds.

The men roll out of their tents about seven in the morning, swallow a good hearty breakfast, and then are on the road hacking down trees, pulling out stumps, or grading until about six in the evening, with an hour's break for the midday meal. Supper over, the time is frittered away according to individual inclination, a good many sitting round the camp fire swapping stories of

ill-luck, between puffs of tobacco, and enlightening the younger members on the caprices of Fortune.

The pay averages about 11s. per day in the Government employ up-country. The men have to board themselves, although the services of a cook are supplied at the Government's expense, inasmuch as no frontier working camp can be kept going without an expert master of the canvas kitchen and the wood-burning range. The men, as a rule, depute the cook to the additional honorary office of housekeeper, one and all subscribing an equal amount per day for their upkeep. The Government supply the goods required at cost price, but when the men are working in a remote territory suffering from lack of transportation facilities, the freightage charges are liable to enhance the prices by 50 or more per cent. Still, striking the average, about 2s. per day per head (to which fund the cook also contributes) generally suffice to meet the requirements of the table, giving a varied and plentiful menu. The men themselves in their spare time are able to contribute to the fare by means of fish, fur, and feather from the woods and streams, at the same time gaining excellent sport. Taken on the whole, employment among the road-builders in the frontier districts can be relied upon to bring in a steady 8s. a day; and as there is no social position to maintain, incidental expenditure being confined to the purchase of little luxuries such as tobacco, a single season's employment should bring in about £80.

On the Government contracts the cost of building the first road averages from £70 to £80 per mile, this expenditure being represented almost entirely by labour. Now and again the cost will be inflated by the necessary erection of a somewhat pretentious bridge—in timber—over a river, or the installation of a ferry, but this is abnormal expenditure. In the first instance the Govern-

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ment sometimes prefers to permit private enterprise to carry out the bridge, subsequently settling the bill with those who participated in the scheme, such as, perhaps, a band of farmers, or settlers, who have co-operated together in the project to meet general convenience.

At times the construction of a new road is carried out by contract, and then the private individual strives to make the most out of the undertaking. Some of these contractors attempt to cut the scale of wages, hoping to enrol Norwegians, Russians, and other foreigners who are not familiar with the conditions of the country, or will even endeavour to press the Chinaman into service. But at times these carefully-laid schemes are sent to the four winds.

There was one contractor in the West who, having had his tender accepted, thought he saw himself well established on the road towards being a millionaire. He figured it up very carefully, and the paper results were highly gratifying—to himself. He came to the conclusion that 6s. a day would be ample for labour, notwithstanding the fact that the ruling scale in his vicinity was 10s. per diem for the lowest grades of unskilled labour.

He started work, and the labourers appeared on the scene thinking the general wage was certain to be paid. When they learned the actual scale a riot almost broke out. The contractor dared them to do their worst, and he collected some hard-up emigrants searching for work in a neighbouring town. When they appeared on the job, the dissatisfied workmen rounded up the new arrivals, explained the situation, and wooed them away. The contractor was furious. This was a *contretemps* he had not anticipated. He scoured farther afield, and brought in another large gang of foreigners, even paying their railway fares. They were intercepted in the same

way, and threw down their tools. The original workmen hung about the contractor's place and jeered him "to get a move on" with his job. Thoroughly infuriated, the latter resolved to employ Chinese labour, and that acted as the red rag to the bull. Directly the yellow-men, who are notorious in undercutting white labour, arrived, there was one long howl. The contractor laughed and yelled out that he had got the best of the bargain. But the white men were not going to be overridden so easily. Each returned to his shack, routed out his shotgun, revolver, or what other firearm he could command, and returned to the scene. Things looked ominous, but there was no intention to promote bloodshed. One of the workmen, a tall, athletic English fellow, was deputed to explain to the Chinamen that they had better clear out as soon as they could, or else his pards would be compelled to indulge in the gentle sport of "chink-chasing." The Chinamen took the hint and threw down their tools.

At last the contractor saw that he would have to cut his paper profits down, so he gave in; he would pay 10s. a day. But the English spokesman shook his head: "No, you son of a gun! You've held us up trying to sweat prices. Now we're going to hold you up. Not a move is made on that job until you agree to pay sixteen shillings a day. You see, we've lost time in hanging out, and we've got to make good our losses."

The contractor stormed, threatened, and cursed. He pointed out that he would lose over the job on that scale of pay, but his remonstrances were of no avail. "Sixteen shillings or nothing," was the ultimatum. He held out for a few hours, and then reluctantly agreed. Instantly the dirt began to fly. "We didn't see much of the boss on that job," the young Englishman chuckled. "I guess he put in most of his time figuring how he would come out of it when we had finished."

CHAPTER V

TRAPPING

WHEN winter spreads her white mantle over the country, bowing down the trees as if in sorrow at the braking of the wheels of progress, and the ground is hidden from sight ; when Jack Frost catches all the waterways in his relentless icy grip, the wilderness is closed. Those within are incarcerated almost as tightly as if behind prison bars, while those without are as much baffled in trying to get in as if the confines bristled with guns against an invading army. All the occupations of the summer are brought to a close. The packer has hitched his horses on the home ranch ; the prospector has struck his camp or locked the door of his shack ; the surveyor has picked up his transit and level ; the timber cruiser has folded up his notebook and stowed it away in his pocket—all who find a living in the wilds when the waterways are open, and the trails are visible in the gloom of the trees, seek sanctuary in the nearest towns, unravelling the results of the summer's work, weighing up their chances of success, all marking time more or less until the winter breaks, when they hark back once more to the fields of their labours.

Everything in a new country is brought practically to a standstill. Even that native inhabitant of the woods, the bear, tucks himself away in a snug retreat, and waits until the clock of springtime recommences ticking. The only break to the eternal peace and solitude



R. C. W. Lett.

AT BAY !

The grey timber-wolf snapped from close quarters, with the camera in one, and an automatic pistol in the other, hand.



Harry Wrathall.

DRYING A GRIZZLY BEAR'S SKIN, SHOT BY THE INDIANS IN THE
SKEENA MOUNTAINS.

—white as a harbinger of peace is represented in its most compelling form—is afforded by a stray Indian with his huskies, or perhaps a dog-train trailing, or, as it is locally called, mushing along with infinite effort through the blizzard, braving the fates above, with His Majesty's mails aboard for some remote settlement, because somehow or other, in the wilderness, as in the settled country, the mail service must be kept going. The logging camps are busy, but the circle of their activity is so small as to be an indecipherable dot upon the enormous landscape.

Yet one form of human life ekes out an existence, and profitably at times. This is the trapper. As a rule he is generally a packer, a prospector, or some other human denizen of the wilds, who cannot tolerate kicking his heels about a town for three or four months, and who would rather brave the silent white tomb in the endeavour to make ends meet than occupy his mind in the town until he can resume his natural occupation.

It demands no supernatural powers to distinguish a trapper whenever and wherever you see him. He betrays his calling whether he is sitting round a camp fire, on the verandah of a hotel, or in a cosy drawing-room. He is eternally whittling wood and sharpening his knife. These employments for idle hands come as naturally to him as it is instinctive to move the teeth in order to masticate food, or to blink the eyes. Even when he is conversing he is incessantly whittling meanwhile.

Why is it? This was the question asked me by a young lady when her brother came home from Canada one winter. He had little regard for the drawing-room pile carpet. To sit down in a chair and pass his time in accordance with time-honoured etiquette was absolutely impossible to him. He pulled out his knife, and absent-mindedly ran it up and down the arm of the mahogany chair, to the intense horror of his mother. When recalled

to his senses, he wandered into the depths of the house, and returned as delighted with a few sticks of wood as if he had struck a gold mine. The rest of the evening he amused himself whittling away, strewing the carpet with chips, conversing slightly meanwhile. Ever after that a few sticks of wood were placed prominently on the hearth to amuse him and to save the furniture from his vandalism. Yet, if that wondering young lady and horrified mother had been with the young man in the wilds trying to keep body and soul together during the long winter, 300 miles or more from the nearest town, they would have understood.

Whittling is the only thing that keeps the trapper alive when he is not busy with his captures. And it must be confessed that more time is spent in whittling wood than in any other occupation. If it were not for whittling, the trapper would go mad ; it takes Old Father Time off his hands.

Trapping sounds attractive, and it constitutes a fine romantic peg upon which to hang adventurous fiction, but when you meet the trapper at his trade in the silent wilds, there are precious few signs of romance apparent. A grind on the treadmill is paradise in comparison. Milady bedecks herself in rich furs, and is the envy of her neighbours and friends in the fashionable city, but does she ever give a thought to the moil, the wasting of blood and tissue, the stunning of the brain, the blighting of hopes for which those furs have been responsible ? If she did, they would not rest so lightly on her shoulders. Isolated confinement in its worst form, living in such a way that body and soul are just kept together and no more, the deprivation of the sight of a human face for months, more likely than not, has been the price of that gay attire, with perhaps a life or two that no one cares twopence about thrown in. Few furs are worn that do not hold the story of a grim fight for life.

Somehow the frost-bound wilderness calls the young and old. It entices them within its embrace, often never to let them escape. If the man is on serious business bent, he perhaps seeks a chum, not for conversation, because in a week all topics are worn threadbare, but just to get the sight of a human face. They gain their centre of activity and camp is pitched. Round this, in a circle of many miles diameter, a string of traps for the marten, bear, and other quarries, are set. In the morning the two discuss their sparse meal of pork and beans, washed down with tea if they have it, otherwise with luke-warm water. Then the examination of the traps commences. The circular trail is divided in two. One goes off on the eastern moiety, the other takes the western section. Maybe it is a tramp of twenty miles or so to the outermost point and back. They meet where the semicircles come together, and one anxiously looks to see if the other has had any luck. If favourable, they display their prizes for each other's approbation; if not, they tramp wearily back to camp as silent as funeral mutes, and settle down to the evening meal.

The prizes to be won are not so common as might be supposed. One young fellow related how he and his chum trod the semicircles day after day for three weeks, and never found even a rabbit in a trap. Such ill-luck as this knocks the heart out of all but the strongest men. He was used to it as he had put in several winters at the game; but he had a raw lad with him this winter, and the latter, when he saw how things were going, could not resist giving way, and cursing the stars above for luring him on to such a crazy fortune-hunting scheme. They spent four months in this camp, and when they returned to civilization, they found that their imprisonment and privations had brought them £20 apiece. The raw lad forswore trapping ever after, but his older chum gave a

short, rasping laugh. "Why, it's the luck of the life." He took the fat with the lean years. The former three winters in succession had been lucky to him, for he had netted over £100 in four months on each occasion. He knew he could not expect to maintain this average, but he confessed that it was rough for the tenderfoot to have a misdeal on the first round.

Trapping is more a game of luck than even gold prospecting. In the latter instance you have a chance, perhaps a long one, but knowledge helps you. In trapping you are at the free end of Fortune's string. Possibly the Indians have been ahead of you, and have skinned a promising country of every trace of fur and feather because the red man is a relentless hunter. He shoots everything on sight. If a complaint is levelled against his tactics, he is always ready with the retort that "his existence depends upon hunting, and he must live." The Government, however, is realizing the folly of this truism, and is closing large tracts of land against even Indian despoliation.

The task of the trapper has been rendered harder by the march of civilization. As the white settlers spread out reclaiming the land for agricultural and development purposes, the game retreats. To-day the trapper is driven almost to the Arctic circle to prosecute his activities. Then, again, several of the most valuable animals from the commercial point of view have come under the protective wing of the Government. The beaver and the moose in particular are cases in point. This has been done to save these animals from extermination. For the most part the white man respects the law, but the Indian does not. I was at one Hudson Bay trading post when a stranger, who did not know the ropes, called and tried to trade a score of beaver skins.

The factor looked at him with ill-concealed contempt.

"What right has a white man about here with beaver skins?"

The stranger was nonplussed.

"Say, sonny, you had better get shot of that load right away," the factor went on, "or you'll get into the cage."

The man departed crestfallen. It must be admitted that the authorities press home their powers with vigilance and severity. One well-known trading company got caught with a large stock of several hundred beaver skins in a western town. The whole lot was confiscated and destroyed, while the company was mulcted in several thousand pounds for trading in illicit fur.

Practically every animal receives a certain meed of protection during the year, with perhaps the solitary exception of the wolf family. This animal is exterminated with as little compunction as the rat. The finest specimens are massive brutes, and tough foes to overcome, while the fact that they run in packs during the winter renders them a severe menace to the safety of small isolated communities. As a rule they are too cunning to be trapped, and are generally shot down. The bear is a good prize, and is in his prime in the first stretches of spring, when his pelt is in magnificent condition. A hole is his favourite hiding-place, and in these pits traps, massive creations of wood, are formed by dint of much effort on the part of the trapper.

The richest fur centre in the Hudson Bay Company's territory is Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River. It serves a district extending over 1,200 square miles in length by as far north as the trapper cares to go, and derives its supply of furs from thirteen other posts. In the heyday of its prosperity, the shipment of furs from this post to the value of £20,000 in a season was considered a poor total, but this aggregate under present prices would represent over £50,000.

The gradual and persistent narrowing down of the fur-bearing country, and the coincident necessity of the trapper to penetrate into more and more inaccessible regions, has resulted in a pronounced increase in the value of furs. One of the Hudson Bay trading factors, who has spent some forty years in the wild frost-bound north, gave me the following table of fur-values, which shows readily how prices have risen during a period of thirty years :

	Per Skin in 1880.			Per Skin in 1910.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Bear	1	10	0	6	0	0
Beaver	0	4	0	1	8	0
Ermine	0	0	3	0	4	0
Fischer	0	7	0	2	16	0
Fox, Black	5	0	0	500	0	0
Silver	5	0	0	50	0	0
Cross	1	0	0	10	0	0
Red	0	2	6	1	4	0
White	0	2	6	2	0	0
Kit	0	1	0	0	8	0
Lynx	0	2	5	1	4	0
Marten	1	0	0	4	0	0
Mink	0	2	0	2	8	0
Musquash	0	0	3	0	4	0
Musk Ox	1	0	0	10	0	0
Otter	0	4	0	10	0	0
Wolverine	0	5	0	1	8	0
Swanskins	0	2	6	0	12	0
Rabbits	0	0	2	0	2	0
Hare, Arctic	0	2	0	0	4	0

The black fox is the Royal fur, and has become exceedingly scarce ; so much so, that the trapper who secures one of these must be considered as having an unprecedentedly good streak of luck. They come into the market very seldom indeed. One was sold at Edmonton some two or three years ago, and before the hammer fell, the bidding had risen to £500.

Many strange adventures have been written around the trapper's life, and the romance fires the imaginative mind. But one experience is generally sufficient for the tenderfoot, when the calling is found stripped of all its romantic details. At the present moment it is the most precarious means of earning a living in Canada, while the chances of coming in at the end of the winter with insufficient prizes to defray the cost of the expedition, are overwhelmingly greater than the possibilities of making a good haul, unless one is prepared to penetrate into the most inaccessible and more forbidding districts to the extreme north. Then the difficulties attending transit and the packing of provisions must be borne in mind. There are still some rich fur-bearing districts to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, north of the Fraser River, and for bear along the northern coasts favouring the Skeena, Stickine, and Naas Rivers. Some of the higher slopes of the lower hills of the interior of British Columbia, such as around Tachick Lake, are thickly infested with game, but for the most part this more easily accessible country has been skinned by the Indians.

Numerous thrilling adventures may be recounted of the life, and they are mostly of a desperate character. One old trapper who had established himself permanently in a good country, had run up a comfortable shack, and dwelt there with his wife and child; he was out on an expedition with the latter one day, when, on the homeward journey, and within hailing distance of his home, he tumbled across a bear with her two cubs. It was the early spring, the snow still lay in patches under the trees, and the bear, having her young with her, was both hungry and savage. The trapper scuttled his son into the bush and then drew on the bear. He missed the mother, but bowled over one of the cubs, wounding it

mortally. The bear tended her shrieking offspring and glancing round caught sight of the trapper barely twenty paces distant. She made for him. The man stood his ground, and taking careful aim, let drive. The bullet missed and evidently the sight on his weapon had become deranged from some cause or other, because four other shots, while hitting the enraged lady, did not stop her, but merely increased her fury. They came to close grips, the trapper discarding his useless firearm and drawing his murderous knife from its sheath.

A desperate battle for life ensued, with the odds all on the side of the bear. She endeavoured to get the man within her deadly embrace, but he kept plunging his knife up to the hilt in her body, dodging, twisting, and slashing her forepaws wickedly. Blood coursed from the animal's body in a dozen streams, smothering her opponent until he presented a ghastly sight. The trapper's son, anxious to extend what help he could, ventured from his concealment and stared in wonder.

The father caught sight of his terrified boy, and cried excitedly, "Run home, sonny! Tell your mother I shall not be long!" and the youngster sped homewards as fast as his little legs could carry him, to relate how father was fighting with a bear.

The tussle did not last much longer. The bear overpowered the hunter, hugged, and clawed the life out of him. When the agonized mother, who, upon hearing her child's story, had snatched a gun and rushed off to help her consort, reached the scene, she found both hunter and hunted lifeless. The man was still in the brute's deadly embrace, and was scarcely recognizable. The bear had torn his clothes to ribbons, and his face was scratched to shreds. His ribs and breastbone were smashed—crushed by the fearful hug of the bear. Both were reeking with blood. The bear's skin was absolutely



A TRAPPER'S SHACK ON THE SHORES OF LAKE KATHLYN.

It is a rough tumble-down domicile of logs and shingles which serves to keep off the elements. In the background

riddled with knife cuts, showing the terrible character of the man's fight for life, and his hand was clenched to the knife, which was buried up to the hilt in the bear's heart.

Another trapper had quite as exciting and uncanny an adventure. He was one of a small party of trappers who had pushed into the far northern country so as to have a better opportunity to get a good haul. One and all were skilled men, having followed this pursuit for years. They had pitched an excellent camp, and their general procedure was to sally out every morning, returning at nightfall with the pelts of whatever prizes they had snared in their traps, or brought down with the rifles.

The country was badly broken, and the snow was thick and heavy. One day, one of the men, about four miles from the camp, was floundering among the hummocks of snow, when suddenly he gave a yell as his feet slipped from under him. He shot from brilliant daylight into inky blackness in an instant, and pulled up with a nasty jar. He had fallen into a hole which he had not seen, because a fallen tree had covered its mouth; directly he had trodden upon the covered branches the rotting fabric had given way beneath his weight.

He lay half-stunned for some few minutes, and then carefully moving his limbs, was gratified to find that no bones were broken, though he was sorely bruised. While he was wondering what he should do, he heard a sound that jerked him bolt upright as if he had been electrocuted. It was an ominous growl from the opposite side of the hole. The truth flashed on him in an instant; he had tumbled into a bear's lair! He received ample evidence of this unwelcome fact, for while he was listening intently and endeavouring to peer through the gloom, he felt a lick at his hands, and a scratching at his legs. Phew! she had got cubs! This was a desperate

position. He stretched his hand above his head to feel if he could get a foothold in the rock and thus climb out, but the wall was as smooth as a board after a jack-plane had been run over it.

Big beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead. His gun was twenty feet above, on the snow outside, as he had involuntarily dropped it when he felt his feet slipping suddenly from beneath him. He had his knife, but he knew he would stand very little chance with it against his adversary if he provoked her to anger.

The cubs, however, did not appear to resent his sudden intrusion, and considered him an excellent plaything. Judging from their size he surmised that they were about three months old, because the breaking of winter was almost due, at which time the bears come out of their dens. He concluded that the best thing would be to take his chance by keeping as quiet as possible, inasmuch as when he was missed his "pards" would be certain to come out to search for him. So he drew closer against the wall, sat up, and attempted to amuse the cubs. They were spitefully playful, and were manifestly very anxious to try their claws upon him. Now and again he would give one a cuff it did not appreciate, causing it to give vent to a loud squeal, which was instantly answered by a growl of inquiry from the other side of the den. The old lady had not observed his entrance, or if she had scented him, as she must have done, she did not seem inclined to tackle him. Now and again she would lumber over to where he sat, knife in hand, ready for an attack, but she always went away when she saw her cubs were not being harmed. The latter at periodical intervals returned to the mother, and thus gave the unfortunate trapper a slight, well-earned respite from their antics.

When night fell, and he could not see an inch in front

of him, he wondered what was going to happen. Sleep was impossible ; fear kept him awake. Every other minute he would start up thinking that he felt the old brute sniffing him over. Once she did make a close examination, and when she reared up on her hind-legs to the fullest extent of her 7-feet stature, he gripped his knife more tightly than ever, and was ready to slip to one side out of her deadly embrace.

When the morning broke, and he found himself still unscathed save for some scratches from the cubs, he pulled himself to his feet quietly, and silently glided round the den, feeling for some means of escape. With one eye on the corner where the old lady was lurking, and his arm outstretched, feeling the smooth rocky surface, he did not see where he was stumbling, and his heart stood still when he trod on one of the cubs and provoked such a squealing and growling that he thought his time had come. The old lady evidently now concluded that something serious was the matter and started off upon a close investigation. This was just what the trapper did not want, as he felt mischief was brewing. The mother ambled across the den, and brushed against him ; then she turned round with a fearful growl. Here was the cause of her youngster's disquietude. The trapper saw that a fight was imminent, and, braced up with terror, he decided to make a bold show. His knife was sharp, long, and his arm was supple and steady. As the brute wheeled round, he gave a fearful lunge, ripping up her side. Thoroughly roused, she sprang to the attack. Twice he got the knife home, but as it was not in a vulnerable spot the blows were worse than useless. Every time the bear advanced he dodged her, but more than once it was only at the expense of a terrific drag of her claws, which stripped his coat to ribbons and tore the flesh in parallel lines.

The fight went on for about half an hour—it seemed years to the trapper—and the two dodged round and round the cave. The din was fearful, the cubs were squealing at the tops of their voices, and the mother was growling savagely. Her forepaws were reeking with blood, where the trapper had slashed them with his knife, and the man was exhausted by his exertions and unequal fight. Fortunately, the bear was in a similar plight, but she possessed far more stamina and could keep up the contest for hours yet, whereas the man felt as if he would fall every minute. While they were sparring round and round the pit, he suddenly heard his name called. Giving a glance upwards to the hole through which he had fallen, he saw the faces of three of his chums who were searching for him. They had followed his trails, had found his gun, and had observed also the hole in the snow from which most unearthly sounds were coming. From the volume of noise they thought that half a dozen bears were fighting and quarrelling, until it dawned upon them that their chum was in the pit.

The unfortunate trapper gave a faint hail in reply, which warned his partners that they were only in the nick of time. With feverish haste they started slashing away at the hole with their axes, sending a shower of snow and other débris into the pit. This development startled the bear and distracted her. The trappers tore away at the hole as if for dear life, until they had got an opening some 6 feet square. Then two, gripping their rifles, and able to see into the pit, yelled to their unfortunate chum to stand clear. The two rifles barked twice in unison and four shots settled Bruin. The trapper in the lair was overcome by the reaction and fainted. Instantly one dropped into the pit, which was about 12 feet deep, despatched both the cubs, and then set to tending his prostrate chum. With great difficulty he was got out

of the hole, revived, bound up, and carried back to camp. The fever laid hold of him, and for over a week he raved in delirium about his desperate fight in the den. His wounds were serious and refused to heal, while as the camp had no medical outfit of any kind, the sufferer's distress could not be alleviated. As the winter was breaking, they struck their camp, piled up their sledges, and returned with extreme difficulty to the nearest settlement. Here they were able to give their comrade better attention, but unfortunately erysipelas supervened, and the poor fellow succumbed.

Some of the old trappers still talk about this story. They do not speculate as to what they would have done had they been pitched into the same quandary ; that is not the trapper's way. They merely relate the story, shrug their shoulders, and finally dismiss it as “the luck of the life.”

CHAPTER VI

CORD-WOOD CUTTING

THE tenderfoot arriving in Canada with a slender pocket, but with a good stock of determination, muscle, and enthusiasm aboard may find himself called upon to follow many apparently strange and unattractive methods for keeping the wolf from the door. At home, such chances of making a bit would be dismissed with contempt, but the West is a great leveller. It is only the man who is prepared to do anything and everything when he is struggling around the bottom of the ladder, that stands any chance of reaching the topmost rung.

In this category of apparently unattractive callings is the cord-wood cutter—firewood chopping in England, if you like. Here, this task is generally associated with the Church Army, Salvation Army, and other societies established for the avowed purposes of ameliorating the conditions of the unemployed. The average out-of-work would just as soon think of selling matches in the streets, or sweeping crossings as splitting wood; it is regarded as one of the most contemptible occupations in the labour scale.

Canada, however, both in the East and West, although, perhaps, more strongly in the latter, depends very materially for its existence upon the cord-wood cutter, inasmuch as outside the cities wood is the staple fuel. Consequently, somebody has got to go into the woods to secure this commodity, and 8s. a

day or more is not bad pay for such work. It is more than the labourer receives on the farm, although the latter has his board and lodging thrown in. As a matter of fact, the new arrival in the West scarcely could do better than take a spell at this work. Certainly he is introduced to a profitable educational course, because a man who cannot wield an axe skilfully, and without pulling the tool up against his limbs more frequently than the tree, is of no more use to the country than a telescope is to a blind man.

The axe is the national weapon, and the man who is expert therewith never finds himself at a loss, whether it is a matter of merely lopping down trees, fixing up a raft, or removing with painful slowness the interior of a cottonwood or cedar tree to fashion a dugout. It seems a simple matter to swing an axe to and fro methodically, but a short trial convinces the tyro very speedily that actually performing work is vastly different from watching somebody else doing it. There is an art in bringing down trees, also in lopping them up, and there is more than an easily acquired knack in learning how to put more edge on the tool than taking it off with a whetstone.

Half an hour's acquaintance with the axe and a refractory tree, especially if it happens to be a towering pine that has been killed by fire, and has become thoroughly hardened by the blasts of many seasons, will take the heart out of the tenderfoot as well as the skin from his hands. By that time he will conclude that cord-wood cutting is a modernized and well-perfected system of torture. He will feel as if his back is being torn into shreds; that half-a-hundred or more demons are playing tug-of-war with his muscles; that his lungs are battling against a vacuum pump, and that his arms are being torn from the shoulders by an invisible rack.

But the first half-hour's torture is nothing to what he will experience when he wakes the next morning. He will search in vain for a square inch of flesh on his body which is not sore and tender ; every bone he knows, and a good many others of which he is ignorant, will seem to be bursting through the skin ; the muscles will feel as if they had become tangled up in knots, and were having a desperate difficulty to unravel themselves. His hands will be covered with wounds—the foundations of terrible corns. His camp colleagues will probably remind him chaffingly that he did about a dollar's worth of work the previous day, but will suggest that he takes it easy for a while until he has recovered the results of his first effort. By that time he will be fit, and thenceforward will progress rapidly in his education.

But wood-splitting differs from its contemporary task in Britain. The tree is not reduced to the small bundles of slender sticks with which our household fires are lighted. Wood is sold in Canada in the same manner as it is vended in France, the unit being "the cord" which represents a stack measuring 8 feet in length by 4 feet deep and 4 feet high. The trees usually employed for this purpose have a butt diameter of 6 to 9 inches, and it generally suffices to cut the stump into lengths of 4 feet and then to split them lengthwise in twain. If the tree is of greater dimensions the longitudinal division will be proportionately greater. The wood thus split is stacked in piles, and when the height reaches 4 feet, an indication of the fact is shown by some means of ready identification. Therefore, when purchasing, the buyer merely measures the length of the pile from end to end, counts the number of 4-foot sections vertically, and as the depth is correct owing to the logs being about 4 feet long, the calculation is very simple and quickly accomplished. The wood may be too bulky for the ultimate buyer, but



ON THE TRAIL OF THE POACHING TRAPPER IN ALGONQUIN PARK, ONTARIO.
The nefarious hunter steals through the bush so that his snowshoe tracks may not be seen.

R. C. W. Lett.

the latter has to accomplish the final splitting to his own satisfaction.

The price paid for the wood varies according to the locality and the demand. From 10s. to 15s. a cord is a good average in some places, while in others, where it is scarce, it will run up to a fancy figure. The cord-wood cutter, however, taking it all round, can look forward to a return of about 10s. per cord for his labour. If he works hard and long, is expert with the axe, and can keep going, he can split up from one to two cords of wood per day, representing a return for the sweat of his brow up to 20s.

An indication that the job is not to be despised is offered by the varied characters pursuing this calling. All sorts and conditions of men, generally in groups of twos and threes, and in odd contrast to one another, may be found scattered through the woods. The man who has never been to school and scarcely knows a pot-hook from a Roman numeral, shakes down in the bunk beside the scholar, who has won his spurs in Greek and Latin at the University; the former office clerk, expert in juggling with figures, jostles with the man who has never held a pen in his fingers; the ne'er-do-anything-at-home who idled his day in immaculate attire, and who was banished to Canada on a "remittance," shares his pork and beans with the sourdough, who has scratched rocks and sifted black sand from his infancy. None will explain why he has taken to the cord-wood business. It is a welcome variation in the interlude of life, and money can be made—that is the only attraction. From morning to dark they swing the axe with mechanical measure, bringing down the trees and dismembering them into the everlasting chunks, with brief cessations for meals, and when it is too dark to see any longer they sit around the camp fire vigorously plying the whet-

stone to the axe's edge. Variety only comes when visitors strike the camp, and then there is high revelry, because these men are born raconteurs, so that stories, grim, grave, and humorous, are hurled from one side of the fire to the other.

The life may seem humdrum, but it brings its own excitement. The men are their own masters, and now and again they drop the axes for a day's hunting, stalking the grizzly, chasing, or being chased by an enraged black bear with her cubs, tracking deer, or caribou, or bringing down wild ducks and geese by the score for the larder. They get excellent sport, with now and again some unexpected developments. Two of the boys, when I struck their camp, regaled me with a bit of fun they had had two or three days previously. They were having a day off, as a big grizzly had been seen hanging round the camp, and they resolved to bag him to save dispute between him and themselves.

They set off with their rifles and a goodly store of ammunition. They soon picked up the spoor, and having hit upon the most recent tracks, followed them up. While they were stealing along quietly, eyes and ears alert, they heard a crashing in the brush on one side. They pulled up and stepped into the bush. About twelve feet ahead they espied not only the grizzly that had been haunting their shack, but its mate as well. This result was scarcely expected; but they became so excited with the possibility of bringing the two huge lumbering brutes down that they started off after the retreating forms. The foremost of the men, when he thought he was in good sight, let drive, although he realized that he was at a disadvantage in attacking from the rear. The bullet struck the leading bear in the buttock, and to the hilarity of the hunters, the brute turned round, and, thinking his consort had bitten him, gave her a smart

snap. Milady resented this unprovoked assault, especially as just then she received a smack in her flank from the second rifle, and she set about her consort in a merry fashion. The two hunters were so amused with the unusual spectacle and its cause that they burst into laughter. The sound of their mirth reached the ears of the quarrelling animals, who looked round. Both divined at once that the men were the cause of the quarrel, and they came lumbering along towards the hunters on dire mischief bent. The foremost rifle let fly two or three shots in quick succession, and emptied its magazine, but the shots were without effect. They hit both animals, but instead of inflicting any damage, merely lashed the two brutes into fearful fury. The second hunter attempted to fire, but his magazine got jammed.

The situation was somewhat alarming and both men broke cover with the bears in hot pursuit. The man whose rifle had jammed swarmed a tree in double quick time, as the grizzly is not a climber, while his comrade ran on, filling his magazine as he went as best he could. The one in the tree thought he could get his rifle to work again while in refuge so that he could return to the fray. To his astonishment, as he swarmed the tree, he heard a growl above his head and there saw that a big black bear was already in possession, and was coming down on top of him. He was between two fires, and could not get his magazine clear. As the black bear came lower and lower, he got his huge jack-knife ready, and looked down at the vicious wounded brutes pawing the trunk of the tree just below. He yelled out to his mate, who had recharged his rifle, and instantly there was a responsive halloo and two sharp cracks. One shot caught a grizzly fairly and squarely on the frontal bone, smashing it to atoms and penetrating its brain. It gave a lurch and fell forward dead.

Meantime the position in the tree was thrilling ; the black bear was only some four feet above the second hunter's head and was peering down at him rather quizzically. The man worked his way down slowly, keeping his eyes both on the bear above and that below. Seeing that one brute had handed in its checks, he yelled out, "For the love of Mike, knock the other grizzly over ; there's a black bear in this tree with me !"

Another crack spurted out, and the second grizzly fell back in a heap on the ground, clawing the air and the tree trunk which it could just reach, in frenzy. The shot had ploughed clean through her spine. But Mister Black Bear above was getting fidgety. He thought it time to come down to make a close investigation. The treed hunter edged down a bit more until he stood on a branch about four feet from the ground, whence he could reach out his left hand and touch the other "cuss" still struggling.

With a "Hold up, pard !" the treed man gave a jump, just missed the grizzly, fierce and helpless in her death agonies, below him, stumbled to his knees and picked himself up quickly, as the black bear also rolled to the ground. He grabbed his gun and tore towards his chum, keeping out of the latter's line of fire. The other wondered whatever was the matter when he saw his pal pitch to the ground, but directly he saw the black brute he raised his rifle. In two minutes both animals had received their quietus. The two men had received more diversion and excitement, as well as a bigger bag, than they had anticipated. The grizzly skins were shown to me, and the two fellows roared heartily over the episode.

In the new districts, which are now being opened up rapidly, there is great activity in cord-wood cutting, as well as along the up-country waterways where steamboats

are plying. The vessels burn wood, which is cheap and abundant, in preference to coal, which is scarce and expensive. On a busy river, such as the Skeena, cord-wood cutting has been a profitable occupation for several summers past, but more particularly during the period of constructing the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway along its banks. Before the arrival of the railway the Hudson Bay Trading Company's boats plied up and down between the posts at Essington and Hazelton, the latter being the distributing point to many of the inland posts.

The river makes a swirling rush to the sea, and the boats, although capable of clipping along in smooth water at about fourteen miles an hour, can scarcely make two miles upstream in that time at some places on the waterway. To maintain steam under such conditions, the furnaces eat up wood as greedily as a rat devours cheese. On the average the fires consume three cords of wood on the down, and five cords on the upward run, per hour. The ungainly logs are packed round the fires and on the deck, so that the engineer appears to be entrenched like an outpost in war.

When the railway was commenced, five other boats came into service, and they plied up and down incessantly. The demand for cord-wood became tremendous. The cutters selected a promising site, ran up a tent and with great gusto set to stripping the land of small trees immediately around them. As the trees were felled and lopped up, the wood was piled like a fence along the river bank. When the steamer required a fresh supply of fuel, she simply pulled alongside, made fast, and the captain gave the order as to how much he would take aboard. Sometimes it was one-and-a-half cords; at others it was three. An official stepped ashore, ran his rule over the face of the pile, and indicated how much was to be pitched on board the boat. A credit note was

given to the owner for the amount taken, which he could change into cash when he desired. If the owner were not present at the time the steamer called, the wood was taken just the same and a big placard was attached to the pile indicating the name of the ship which had called for fuel. The owner on his return measured how much had been taken, and tendered his bill in due course. The result was just the same. No money was handed over as a rule until the end of the season, for the simple reason that it was useless ; it only got in the way. If the woodcutter required a fresh supply of provisions, he gave an order for his requirements to the down-going boat. On the return journey the supplies were delivered, together with the debit note for same. Upon the conclusion of the season, when the cord-wood cutter perhaps went out, he called at the offices and the account was balanced and settled. Sometimes he would stay in during the winter, increasing his reserves of cord-wood for the succeeding year. The average price ruled about 10s. a cord, and it was a poor week when the cordwood cutter could not make £6 or more.

Although cord-wood cutting is continued through the winter, that season brings its peculiar experiences. One chum of mine and a partner had established a shack, and had made it snug and warm for the cold months, intending to pile up a good stack of cord-wood for the next season. Unfortunately the partner fell ill, and my chum had to set out over the snow-covered trail to the nearest town about twelve miles away, for medical requirements. On the way home he lost the trail, and spent several hours idly wandering in the endeavour to regain his tracks. When he did pick up the trail, he calculated that he had about another eight miles to go, and, although the shades of evening were advancing rapidly, he kept going. But his blind wandering and

ploughing through deep snow had fatigued him, and he stumbled rather than walked along. It was a mechanical, toy-like stride, as there was nothing on either hand to arouse interest, though he gripped his Browning automatic tightly in his pocket. He had not troubled to bring his rifle, feeling that the smaller weapon, with its long, point-blank range, would be quite sufficient if he came into contact with any hostile animal foes, for the wolves were out.

While he was staggering along, suddenly an animal whipped across the path in front of him, followed by another, and another, until at last about twenty brutes had skipped out of the silent forest depths on the one side, to plunge into the wooded darkness on the other. They were coyotes. The sight braced him up, and he gripped his revolver more tightly. Peering into the forest gloom on either side he could see the brutes silently dogging him, quickening their pace when he hurried, and slackening when he slowed down, but ever keeping in line with him. If there is anything more nerve-racking when trailing through a forest, so tired that scarcely one limb can be dragged before the other, than a herd of coyotes, I would like to know what it is. The treacherous brutes keep their eyes glued upon you, they do not give vent to the slightest sound; when you look round they crouch and grovel or stand as motionless as the trees themselves, so that they shall not be distinguished. They are too cowardly to attack, but prefer to hang on like limpets until you drop or stumble into the snow, when they are on you in a moment. Now and again they jumped across his path, drawing in closer and closer as they thought their quarry was beginning to give out.

My chum tolerated the situation for three or four miles, and then could stand the ordeal no longer; so he resolved to out-do in cunning the animals hanging so

relentlessly on his flanks. He was fully acquainted with their ways. He exaggerated his exhaustion, staggered more wildly than ever, but drew his hand from his pocket and gripped his revolver more tightly while cocking it. As he reeled and looked out of the corners of his eyes, he could see the brutes drawing in still closer upon him. When at last they made one of their periodical phantom dashes across the trail in a solid phalanx, this time behind him, he wheeled round sharply, and the Browning gave five or six vicious spits of flame at the heaving mass barely ten paces away. The howls that broke the silence told that several of the shots had got home, and bucking himself together, he strode forward more rapidly, leaving a group of writhing, snarling, and barking animals struggling in the trail behind him. He saw no more of those coyotes; his ruse had completely surprised them, and they were evidently startled at his sudden return of strength.

He thought his troubles were over, but as he approached the shack, which nestled in a hollow under an overhanging bank, he heard a sound that filled him with dismay. The howls of wolves broke upon his ears from directly ahead. Creeping forward silently, his revolver reloaded and cocked, he distinguished a crowd of the beasts in the wood near the shack. They had not caught sight of him, and as he had only a few yards to go he ran for his life. A terrible howl told him he had been seen. He glanced back and saw they were after him in full force. To gain the shack by the winding path was impossible, because they would leap the bank and get between him and the door. With a blind trust in luck he ran to the edge of the bank, gave a spring, and landed on the roof of the shack, at the same time hailing his sick comrade within. The animals jumped likewise, but pitched short of the roof of the shack. Letting fly six

shots promiscuously into the barking crowd, he slipped off the roof and glided into the door, which his comrade had unlatched in readiness, slamming it to as the foremost brute was springing through the air towards it; then, discarding his coat, and picking up his Savage automatic, he returned to the attack, and in two minutes there were three hungry wolves less round the dwelling. Finding the odds so much against them, and being balked of the prey, the savage brutes drew off.

The outfit for a cord-wood cutting expedition is simple and cheap. As a rule, a small party of two or three should work upon the co-operative system. Unless they intend to make permanent quarters in a district where the supply of wood is likely to be continuous, a tent will suffice, otherwise a shack will have to be erected for winter-quarters. A good stock of provisions, such as flour, pork and beans, tea, sugar, and milk, is acquired and cached. The tools will comprise a good supply of axes, both heads and handles, together with whetstones.

The most important point is to secure a good "station." Developing or existing lines of waterway traffic are the most remunerative. At the present moment the stretch of the Fraser River, between Tête Jaune Cache and Soda Creek, representing practically 500 miles of waterway, and the Nechaco River between Fort George and Fraser Lake, nearly 150 miles, are excellent grounds. Both these waterways have been pressed into service for the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, and steamboats are being used upon a large scale for distributing supplies from point to point. There is plenty of timber in this country suited to steamboat firing purposes, and there is not a long haulage from point of felling to stacking on the river bank. The price will range about 10s. per cord, and at this rate it should be an easy matter for a man to clear £20 per month if expert with the axe.

I struck a camp with two young fellows who were in at the beginning of this enterprise. They had selected an excellent station near Fort George, and their first month's work, stacked in a big pile on the bank, represented over one hundred cords. In sterling this was the equivalent to about £50, and could not be reckoned other than a good month's work. Although they were so far in advance of the railway constructional engineers, the latter were to be anticipated by private steamboat enterprise, and despite the fact that their stack might stand for some time it was certain to sell. Even when the railway is completed, there will still be a demand for cord-wood among the populations of the new towns along these rivers, and taken on the whole it must be considered one of the most promising centres for activity of this description.

CHAPTER VII

THE COOK THE AUTOCRAT OF THE CAMP

IF there is one man more than another for whom there is a very keen demand, then that man is the one who is an expert cook. Whether it be on the trail, in a mining camp, in the town, frontier settlement, or among the surveyors and graders of a railway, the disciple of Mrs. Beeton always reigns supreme. He is the autocrat of the community, and he rules with an iron hand. Etiquette at the frontier table may be rough and ready, but it is the chef who commands the situation, and he can make or mar the serenity of the camp. Men will tolerate extreme discomfort, suffer terrible isolation, and overlook a thousand and one disconcerting factors so long as their cook is a master of his craft.

As may be supposed, the cook has not failed to rise to the occasion, and, taken on the whole, he is the most difficult individual to handle. He is the pampered child of necessity. Tough fellows, who bully and browbeat their smaller companions in the camp, cringe like grovelling whipped dogs before the cook. Pitted against such an antagonist as the purveyor to Little Mary, terrorism stands not a ghost of a chance. A crackerjack of a cook, though he be a physical weakling, can retaliate in a hundred different ways if he is driven to it. What is more to the point, he does it. Attempt to override his authority, browbeat him, and disaster swift and sudden follows. The human digestion, hardened by the

bush, can withstand severe buffetings without a quiver, but when the cook deliberately sets himself out to upset gastronomical equilibrium, one may be sure that he will wipe out his score with a good balance in hand.

Strange to relate, it is the young Britisher who excels in the particular rôle of bush chef. Why? It is difficult to say, especially when it is recalled that at home the inculcation of the culinary art does not enter into the masculine educational curriculum. But somehow or other cooking appears to be a second instinct with the Britisher. He may not know the difference between a saucepan and a frying pan when he first strikes the West, but it is not long before he has penetrated the mysteries of the cult, and can prepare the most exquisite pumpkin pie, natty little pasties, and dainty dishes, which would make any autocrat of the millionaire's hostelry turn green with envy.

The chef of the luxurious city hotel or the humble restaurant is querulous almost to mania in his demand for the latest and most up-to-date utensils and condiments with which to prepare his dishes to perfection. In the backwoods of Canada it is not the man who can achieve the greatest successes with the stock of an ironmonger's warehouse who makes the strongest appeal, but the man who can make bread without yeast with the crudest and least of utensils and facilities.

Take the case of a cook attached to a party moving swiftly through a new country. Everything that the open-air kitchen and larder demands must be carried upon the backs of animals. Accordingly, it is imperative that everything shall be cut down to the irreducible minimum so far as weight and bulk are concerned. The cook, despite his overwhelming importance, must bow to circumstances and be satisfied with only the barest necessities in regard to tools for his trade. His outfit

will probably comprise a couple of frying pans, a Dutch oven or reflector—a small collapsible tin affair to serve for roasting and baking—a couple of enamel saucepans or pails, a ewer of similar material, and maybe a couple of small enamel basins. With such limited utensils, he must be prepared to meet every contingency, from the baking of bread to the grilling of salmon; the production of appetizing mush to a huckleberry pie.

On the pack-trail the life of the cook is arduous. He is the first astir and the last to bed as a rule. Although the trail menu is slender so far as variety is concerned, consisting for the most part of bacon, pork and beans, oatmeal, bannock, and tinned fruits in infinite assortment, yet considerable time is occupied in the preparation of even such simple meals. The cook is about between five and six o'clock in the morning, the camp fire is lighted, and the matutinal meal hurried forward, because immediately breakfast is finished the platters are cleaned up and packed so that the pack-train may hit the trail between seven and eight o'clock. During the day the cook fulfils a second rôle—he forms a unit in the crew, steering and driving the pack-train. When the camping ground is reached, towards the end of the day, the cook shoulders his axe and sails off to discover the fuel for his fire. With the shovel he makes a slight excavation, levels the ground, and banks up two superimposed green logs with earth to form a backing to an impromptu roasting fire. By the time the train has been unpacked the evening meal is ready, and an hour is whiled away in its discussion. Then the cook has to hurry forward with such preparations as are possible for the morrow, including the preparation of a small stock of that indigestible staff of life of the trail known as bannock—a concoction of flour, water, baking powder, and bacon fat—cooked in the frying pan like a thick

pancake, or roasted in the portable small reflector. If the elements are kind, the substitute for bread will be light and fairly appetizing, but if it is raining hard the mixture will settle into a lump of semi-cement consistency, often about as heavy, which plays sad havoc with the strongest digestive organs.

When the camp shakes down at one spot for a day or two and the cook is able to take things a little easier, then by the aid of a few "spuds" light, wholesome bread may be anticipated, which comes as a welcome relief to the eternal bannock. The yeast is brewed from the potatoes, and therewith an expert will produce a loaf which, in regard to lightness and flavour, could never be found in a city to tickle a palate.

Considering the exacting character of the work the cook on the trail does not receive a princely wage. It averages from 8s. to 12s. a day, with all found; but the roving spirit does not cavil about a wage which is not to be compared with that obtainable in an established centre, because he is continually on the move, seeing new country, and encountering new sensations. In fact, if the man is at all of a roaming disposition, it is difficult to persuade him to renounce the trail.

It appears absurdly simple to prepare such plain fare as the trail demands, but when one has grappled with the problem, and has been brought up against its difficulties in grim earnest, as was my fate on one occasion, one soon realizes that even the most apparently simple of tasks demands a certain amount of experience and practice. The packer is an agreeable fellow, taken on the whole, so long as he is well fed. If you wish to provoke him to extreme wrath, present him with an indifferently cooked meal; then he becomes a fiend untied. Maledictions galore were hurled at my inoffensive head in the most virile terms when I essayed to upset the

balance of a packer's steel digestion with amateurishly prepared meals.

In an established centre, such as a mining, railway, or some other frontier industrial camp, the lot of the cook is easier and more attractive, while the wages rule much higher. Among the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway constructional camps I found the cook a most amiable and accomplished young fellow. The contractors have realized only too well that if two or three hundred men are provided with a first-class cook, especially adept in the preparation of pie, then peace will prevail. The workman in the West is a rough individual, but flaky pastry, natty cakes, and food tastily prepared to him are Elysium. He looks forward to his meals with as much zest as a company promoter welcomes the hooking of his gulls. The prowess of the cook, if he is up to his work, becomes noised far and wide, and there is a certain feeling of rivalry between the camps.

In this case the cook is provided with a small stove, stoked with wood, and the extent of his labours fluctuates according to his ability to charm the savage breast with good cooking. If he is a peer in his craft, the men will wait upon him hand and foot, splitting his cord-wood, and packing or carrying his water, for he must be kept in the most amiable of tempers or he will get back upon his subjects. If he is indifferent, then the grunting and grumbling is loud and long, he is compelled to perform every duty pertaining to his office with his own pair of hands, and the men will spare no effort to bring about his abdication or deposition.

The cook is arbitrary to a superlative degree. When the meal is ready, he sounds his gong vigorously, warning all and sundry. First come first served is the rule at the frontier table. The laggards must put up with what they get, and must not mutter a word in protest, other-

wise the despot is down on them heavily. In the morning an extra ten minutes in bed carries with it the risk of losing breakfast, because the autocrat of the table waits for no man. On the other hand, if a man is kept from his meal by sheer force of circumstances, then the cook is his best friend, for he will see that the late one does not suffer, and will keep back a share of the tastiest dishes.

Among the railway camps east of the mountains, where the majority of the cooks were British boys, general contentment prevailed. The wages were good—£12 a month with everything found, the maximum comfort the bush would permit, and a general bonhomie. What more could a man desire? On the Skeena River construction works the contractors were experiencing greater difficulty in acquiring good men. The inaccessibility of the situation was an adverse factor. The offer of £16 a month clear did not bring the supply up to the level of the demand.

Yet the cook does not work the whole time from morning to night. He has his intervals of leisure. I met one who hailed from the West of England. He had developed into an enthusiastic big-game hunter in his spare time. He had accumulated a collection of bear skins which would have made a furrier envious. Every hour he could spare, found him out scouring the wilds with his "automatic" for a brown, black, or grizzly bear, wolf, or what not. Sunday was his favourite day for gratifying this whim. The other boys being off duty, a day's sport generally was arranged, and the little party invariably secured a fine bag.

But even the bush grows monotonous. Three years with the same faces day after day, maybe 200 miles from the nearest town, and with only a stranger to brighten up things on rare occasions, palls in time; then the spirit becomes restless, and a craving for the dubious gaiety of

the city becomes manifest. Two or three of the cooks whose camps were pitched in the shadows cast by the sun setting behind the Rockies, were in such a plight. One had not been to Edmonton for over three years. Each had a big wad of notes, representing thirty to forty months' wages, snug and tight. They decided to go out for a time ; to juggle with the glitter and merriment of the boulevards of the city for a while and then, with the rewards of their toil, to launch out in another field of human endeavour. "How can we get back to Edmonton cheaply ?" That was a teasing question. Their camps were pitched deep in the wilderness, on the banks of the Athabasca, which swings along at a merry six or eight miles an hour. Suddenly the brilliant idea occurred to one mind that they should build a raft, float down to Athabasca Crossing, two or three hundred miles to the east, and thence trail south to Edmonton.

The scheme was no sooner suggested than it was decided to adopt it. No other route was so cheap, and look at the fun of the trip ! Consequently the next few days saw those boys mighty busy pulling dead logs out of the forest and pitching them into the river to be attached together by means of wooden pins and cross pieces. It was a trim little craft when completed, with a floor as firm as a liner's deck. The weather was perfect, and an ideal trip was anticipated.

Amid many good-byes the craft was unhitched and poled into the stream, where, being caught up by the current, it was soon floating along merrily. The sun being somewhat hot, and the heavy clothing which each wore being somewhat stifling, coats and waistcoats, together with boots and socks were soon discarded, and the trio enjoyed themselves hugely, basking in the sunshine on the raft, leaving the river current to supply the propelling effort.

But they did not reckon on the fickleness of the Athabasca. They were singing at the top of their voices, and having a rare old time, when—oouch! one and all were nearly knocked off their feet by the jar. The blarmed old raft had run into a submerged sandbar, and before you could blink your eyes it was foundering. One end of the raft was stuck fast in the sand, and the remainder was being sucked down by the force of the current. There was no time to deliberate. The trio sprang into the glacial waters as one man, and struck out boldly for the shore. Gaining the bank they saw the raft break up, and the logs drift downstream. Suddenly there was a wail, "What about our clothes?" Gee! one and all gave a shiver and vent to a healthy curse. They had forgotten them in their excitement. Yet the anxiety was not in regard to the garments, but in the pockets was their money! Three years' wages or more, together with the best part of their attire, had gone in the twinkling of an eye. They stared at one another for a few seconds, held a short council of war, and then started trudging back towards the camps they had left. Edmonton had suddenly lost all its attractions for them, as the city without money is worse than imprisonment in a refrigerator to such men as these. They got an hilarious reception from their camp colleagues when the adventure was related. I met one of the trio. He laughed hugely over the episode, but "guessed it would be a full two years or more before he had got a big enough wad to think about Edmonton again, and the next time he'd walk." The mention of "raft" to him was worse than the word "honesty" to an habitual criminal.

If the cook pulls well with the rough-and-ready boys with whom he is associated, and to whose peculiar tastes he is called upon to minister, he controls the balance of power between employers and employees. More than



THE AUTOGRAT OF THE CAMP.

The cook, his open-air range, and Dutch oven or reflector, which folds up or transport. On the trail this utensil is absolutely indispensable.

R. C. W. Lett.

once the summary dismissal of a cook, deft with pasties and a masterhand at pie, has precipitated an unexpected contretemps. The camp, as one man, has risen in rebellion, and work has been brought to a complete standstill until the chef has been restored to his post. One employer out in the West, somewhat new to the ways of navvies, had a few words with the cook over the amount of food consumed. He point-blank stated that there was "considerable waste" somewhere. The cook resented vigorously this aspersion on his integrity and ability; high words followed, and there and then the employer paid off the menial.

The boys trudged into camp after their hard day's work, as hungry as hunters, but found no tasty supper awaiting them. What was the matter? Cook had been given the "sack" and was in his shack ready to look for another job. The men rallied round him, and the employer at once was surrounded in his office by an angry, clamouring mob, who peremptorily told him that unless he gave them back their cook they would see him to blazes before they would do another stroke of work. The employer stood his ground; he would be boss on his own job. But he changed his tone when an hour later the men presented themselves once more at his shack and demanded their wages up to date. Every man-jack had thrown down his tools. Labour was difficult to recruit, and the contractor had visions of a desperate struggle to fill the places of the men who otherwise were perfectly content. He took the wisest course. He sent for the cook, gave him a mild reprimand in the secrecy of his office, which the chef received with his tongue in his cheek, and an hour later he was back among his pots and pans hurriedly getting the supper ready for his hungry pals.

The stranger cannot fail to be impressed with one

curious circumstance which will strike him forcibly when for the first time he hits a large camp during a meal. Complete silence prevails ; there is no conversation whatever. Not one man of fifty, hundred, or two hundred men ventures to say a word. It is not that conversational powers have been lost, that the men are too hungry, or have too little time in which to discuss their fare to talk. They are observing the unwritten law of the camp ; the etiquette of the frontier table. The cook, possibly assisted by one or two chore boys, has to act as waiter, and if a buzzing conversation were maintained among the company he would be unable to hear the calls of the hungry ones. Woe betide the one who endeavours to break the rule ; he meets with an uncere- monious reproof for his breach of frontier table amenities.

While often the cook in time reverts to the city, having grown tired of the melancholy monotony of the wilderness, many, on the other hand, bury themselves still more completely by launching out on their own account. They become hotel proprietors, their hostleries being known as "stopping places." As a rule they get ahead of development, securing a convenient site near a stream—to facilitate the drawing of water—and here they run up a rude building. It may be one of logs or possibly only of canvas. The stopping place is located on the highroad which the teamsters, freighters, and packers frequent in passing. If the enterprising proprietor gets ahead of civilization, he has to sit down and wait the coming of the settling forces. This is the most astute move, as one invariably reaps the reward of foresight.

It seems somewhat odd to strike an hotel no larger than a cricket tent in the bush, or if it should be a shack, barely large enough to seat twenty men ; but even a canvas covering is better than the canopy of clouds on a wet night, or when the elements are in torment. The

price for the meal is invariably the same—50 cents. And what a meal ! There is no hotel in any city or town which provides such a menu as does the bush hotel for 2s. You start off with a steaming plate of tasty soup, followed by fish, if any can be caught in the vicinity, with an appetizing steak or cut from the joint and an adequacy of vegetables on top ; then comes the frontier boys' delight—pie in a variety of forms, which meets with such wholesale demolition as only a bush appetite can accomplish. The whole is washed down with copious draughts of tea or coffee, according to taste, and if the host be kind, there may be cheese to follow, while the bread would make the diet reformers stare owing to its purity and nourishing qualities.

Two shillings appears a ridiculously low price for an Epicurean meal in the heart of the wilderness, and when you have swallowed it, you cannot refrain from asking how it can be done for the money. With flour possibly ranging about 6d. per pound, and having to be hauled perhaps 150 or 200 miles from the nearest town, it seems a hopeless proceeding to charge such a low sum for a substantial meal in order to satiate such huge appetites as are created in the wilds. But it is the old, old story. The individual meal is a loss, but when perhaps one hundred or more men sit down to the table three times a day, when the stables are chock full of horses during the night, when all the sleeping bunks are occupied—which is more often the case than not—then a comfortable £40 or £50 a day in receipts may be anticipated without any deducting forces of rents, rates, and taxes.

As a matter of fact, a stopping place is an excellent investment so long as the owner displays initiative and ability. The point is to be on the spot first, even if it entails living from hand to mouth for a few weeks. With these attributes must be associated a certain pro-

portion of the capacity to work hard and long ; then success is certain. The fame of the skill of a bush hotel proprietor soon becomes noised far and wide, and then he can rely upon whole-hearted support.

The only drawback to such an existence is that the hotel owner must be continually on the move. If he is identified with the end-of-steel-town which indicates the railhead, and from which point the freighters, packers, and teamsters push out to the practically unknown beyond he must advance with the steel nose of the highway. If he is in advance of the constructing forces, then he must maintain his position. It entails terrible isolation, such as only perhaps a Scotsman—this race figures prominently among the bush hotel proprietors—can tolerate, but it brings its own reward, and in the form of a constantly swelling banking account.



JASPER HOUSE.

A "bush inn," or stopping-place, where meals are served at two shillings per time.

R. C. W. Lett.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE FRONTIER TELEGRAPH LINE

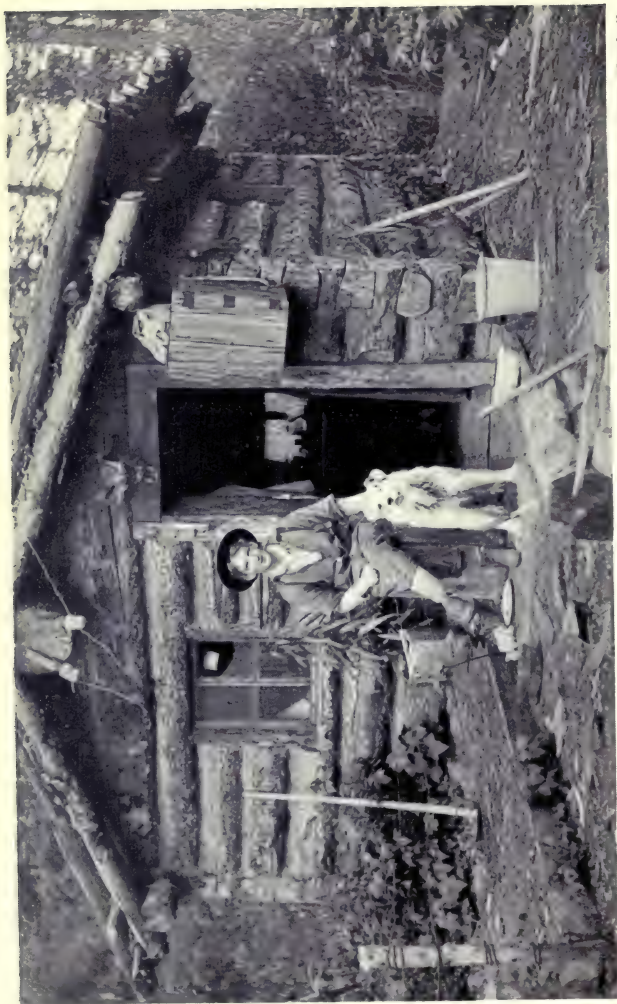
IN Canada, as in other countries, the telegraph is the herald of the settling forces of civilization. Although the greater part of the telegraphic network embraces settled country, linking cities, towns, and villages together in a continuous chain from coast to coast, yet there are several hundred miles of line which even yet droop in festoons through virgin forests forming a hairlike, albeit potential means of communication between the remote isolated districts and civilization. These are pioneer telegraphs in the fullest interpretation of the word. They are laid out by the Government, upon inexpensive lines, being regarded as of a temporary character, to await the coming of private enterprise as the country is opened up to establish a permanent, up-to-date installation. The Government merely breaks the ground with the initial frail link, and generally in the end the system is handed over to a railway.

It is along the route of the pioneer line where the most attractive atmosphere of adventure and romance is encountered. There is nothing humdrum about the telegraphist's life in the lonely cabin on the mountain side, in the swamp, or forest. "Tapping the key" upon a frontier electric wire has none of that monotony associated with the selfsame calling in the crowded cities. It offers an excellent opportunity to make good, not only in regard to the pocket but to health as well.

It must be confessed that in some situations the life is terribly lonely, but the wire-tapper is far better off than his colleagues engaged in other up-country occupations. He is in touch with the world at large. The ghost of the wire ticks out in dot and dash precisely what is happening between the two poles, and very often the operator in his cabin, five or six hundred miles from the nearest town, will be found to be better posted up with the affairs of the world, than the city dweller. The key and the sounder are placed conveniently beside his bunk, and more than one operator has confessed to me that during the darkest hours of the night, when the forest is hushed save for the sounds of the prowling animals, and he has endeavoured to woo sleep in vain, he has merely cut into the wire to listen to what the world beyond is doing. If the business over the line is slack, then the operator calls up a "chum" in a distant cabin, perhaps 100 or 200 miles off, and holds a conversation, with as much ease as if the two were chatting round a camp fire.

One of the most important and busiest of these frontier telegraphs is the "Yukon Wire," whereby the Klondyke is hitched up to London. One end of this line taps the All-red cable route at the station of Ashcroft on the Canadian Pacific Railway, 204 miles east of Vancouver, so that it cuts into the main current of conversation between Britain and the Antipodes. From this point it stretches in an unbroken line northwards through the length of New British Columbia, piercing dense forests, touching isolated Hudson Bay trading posts, spanning the wide shadowy valleys of the north, and topping the snow-crested mountains hemming in Dawson City and its hoard of yellow metal.

This line has a history. The wire now trailing across the skyline was born of the Klondyke gold rush, but



Harry Wrathall.

OPERATOR JACK WRATHALL AT FIFTH CABIN RELAY STATION ON THE YUKON TELEGRAPH LINE BETWEEN
HAZLETON AND DAWSON CITY.

The insulators carrying the wire into the shack may be seen attached to the centre log supporting the roof.

that wire, for the greater part of its distance, was laid over the corpse of another brilliant undertaking. In the sixties of the last century a group of financiers conceived the idea of linking New York with Paris and London, not by means of a cable resting upon the bed of the Atlantic, but by means of an overhead wire running through Asia. The United States system was to be tapped and led northwards through British Columbia and Alaska to the shores of the Behring Straits. A short length of submarine cable was to connect the shores of the American and Asian continents, and then the wire was to push its way through Siberia and European Russia to London. It was a magnificent idea, which ended in a magnificent failure. Le Barge was at the head of the scheme, and with his little band he set out axing a path through the wilds with heavy pack-trains laden with wire. The going was heavy, but by dint of dogged perseverance, the overcoming of prodigious difficulties, and the experiencing of terrible privations, they hoisted the wire as far as Telegraph Creek, south of the Klondyke, and clicked with New York. While the men were busily engaged in their round of toil one day, the temporary sounder at the end of the line ticked out the message that the Atlantic cable was laid and was working successfully. The cable sounded the death-knell of the overland wire from New York to Paris and London. The work was stopped there and then; the men threw down their tools, the machinery was pitched into the ditch, and the party made a mournful retreat southwards.

The line was forgotten almost. It looped mournfully and silently through the trees so long as the posts upon which it was supported braved the storm, and then came crashing to the ground. The roaming Indians, when they desired a short length of wire, clipped it from the overland

telegraph, while the remaining lengths writhed and twisted upon the ground under the accumulation of falling and decaying vegetation. When I made my way along this telegraph trail more than once my horse tripped over a protruding loop of wire, and on several occasions while exploring I was thrown unceremoniously to Mother Earth through my feet fouling the same obstacle.

When the Yukon telegraph line was built the same trail was followed. The broad straight path winding over hill and dale which Le Barge's forces had cut through the bush half a century before was followed. It had become somewhat overgrown with scrub, but this was quickly and easily cleared out, and down the centre of the cleavage the poles were run, and the wire looped and strained into position.

At intervals of about thirty or fifty miles the operators and their cabin are stationed, the distances between varying according to the country traversed. The cabin comprises a wooden shack of the type common to the backwoods, containing two or three compartments for the purposes of living and sleeping. The instrument itself is set up on a small bench or even a table in a convenient corner, lighted possibly by a candle thrust in the neck of a bottle. Were it not for the two wires trailing from the post outside the shack into the building, one might be pardoned for conceiving that the home belonged to a homesteader, especially as it is generally surrounded by a small well-stocked garden. There is very little evidence within of the actual purport of the cabin. Possibly it is empty, but if not a cheery "Halloo" is sure to be received, as the sight of a stranger is welcomed by the lonely inmates.

Beside the shack is another substantial log building. This is the cache, containing 6,000 pounds of supplies—sufficient for twelve months—and as already mentioned,

this larder is restocked once a year by the pack-train. The Government is exceedingly attentive and liberal in ministering to the wants of its isolated telegraphic employés, inasmuch as the comestibles are of infinite variety, so far as is possible with preserved and dried edibles, and there is very little likelihood of the party ever being overwhelmed by famine. In regard to the fresh delicacies for the table, these rest with the operators. Vegetables may be cultivated in the patch around the shack, while the forest and streams yield abundant supplies of game. In the more remote districts the table menu may be varied in season with juicy bear-steaks, venison, grouse, mountain goat and sheep, salmon and trout, which fall to the telegraph-operator's rifle, or line.

Each cabin has two men. One is the operator proper, and he is responsible for the transmission of the messages. He has to be constantly on the alert, as often his particular cabin has to serve as a relay station. That is to say, the electric messages received from four or five cabins behind have to be forwarded onwards, as it is not possible to despatch from Dawson City direct to Ashcroft with the instruments employed. At first sight it may seem a somewhat easy life, as there does not appear to be much cause for heavy business with the Klondyke now that it has quietened down, but this is far from being the case. At times the traffic is exceptionally heavy, and the operator may be on relay duty for four or five hours at a stretch going as hard as he can.

South of the Skeena River the work is somewhat more arduous, as a branch line from Prince Rupert, the new terminal port of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway cuts in at Hazelton, and recently another wire has been carried to Stewart, tapping the goldfields at that point. This renders Hazelton an important clearing centre, as railway

building operations have kept the line busily engaged, for the simple reason that Prince Rupert has no other telegraphic communication with the rest of the country.

The second operator is the linesman, and his duty is to "look for trouble," otherwise to keep the thin steel thread intact. He generally finds it, and it keeps him going from morning to night, often the latter as well, as breakdowns must be repaired instantly, so that the stream of dots and dashes flashing to and fro may not be interrupted. The task is by no means simple, especially when the elements are antagonistic. The line is very flimsily built, and it does not require a very great jolt upon the part of the wind to bring the pole crashing to the ground. The forest fires, however, are the greatest scourge, for they sweep through the parched country, scorching up the posts by the score, or precipitating "dead earths," by which the current runs into the ground, in all directions.

Situate about midway between each station is a small log shack, which is known as the "halfway cabin." This is the limit of the linesman's patrol north and south of the station to which he is attached, and as these halfway houses may be from fifteen to twenty-five miles apart on either side of his station he may be responsible for the upkeep of thirty to fifty miles of wire.

When the line has broken down, and the fault has been located between two adjacent cabins, the respective linesmen from each sally out looking for the cause of the interruption. A few articles of food are slung across a horse's back, together with a blanket, and the linesman's repair outfit, which comprises the indispensable axe, a shovel, and one or two small tools. He covers the trail beside the wire on his section where the fault exists. Maybe he reaches the halfway cabin without discovering any interruption on his part of the line. With his testing instrument he taps the wire to call up his colleague. If

it is all right and the day is not too far advanced, he will return homewards straight away. If late he will shake himself down for the night in the halfway house. The shack is equipped with a stove, and it is not long before the evening meal is ready, upon the conclusion of which he shakes up his rude bed in the bunk and turns in. Maybe his chum from the next cabin who has patrolled his section of the line for the fault reaches the halfway house the same evening, and then the time is passed by the exchange of news-items, anecdotes, and yarns. The morning sees each remounting his horse, and departing in an opposite direction back to his respective cabin.

Such a recital of the day's routine does not appear to offer much attraction or excitement, but as a matter of fact, on the exposed stretches of the line the linesman is out day after day, and sometimes does not pull into his cabin for a week. Or perhaps, after riding hard for the whole day over the length of line to the south to locate and repair a break, he reaches home jaded and worn out, only to find that another interruption has occurred on the north side, and without delay he is off again. One of the boys related to me that on one occasion he did not have a complete night's rest for about a month. The forest fires were fierce, and they brought down the posts one after the other. Seeing that the posts are slender trees about 4 inches in girth at the butt and about 15 feet in length, rudely trimmed, they do not offer a very strong resistance to the flames. As a matter of fact, the wire is far stronger than the posts, and undoubtedly the wire does as much to hold up the posts as the latter serve to support the wire. If a post has collapsed under the strain, out comes the axe, a young pine is soon levelled to the ground, and a few minutes later it is stripped of its branches and crown. A wooden bracket, carrying the glass insulator, is nailed to the top in the twinkling

of an eye, the wire is released from the prostrate post, attached to the new one, a hole is dug, the pole is warped round until its base is over the hole, there is a jerk and a hoist, and the next moment it is standing more or less upright and rammed home.

Some of the experiences of the linesmen in their search for trouble provide amusing reading. The telegraph runs through the heart of the Indian country, and one might be prompted to think that when the Red Men desired a piece of wire to secure their fences or for some other purpose they might raid the telegraph system. But it is not so. The Siwash has a profound regard for that speaking wire ; its potentialities have been brought home to him time after time. Instead of regarding it in the light of a free ironmongery store, he spares no effort to apprise the linesmen of any defect that may become manifest, and will himself often re-erect a pole that has tumbled down without breaking the wire, in order to save the linesman a journey, and to earn his gratitude. But at times this desire to be obliging oversteps the bounds of discretion.

The operator at one cabin one night was relaying away merrily when suddenly to his amazement he found that he was displaying his energy to no purpose ; he was up against a dead earth. The weather was calm, and outside there was not the slightest glimmer of a forest fire reflected in the sky. What was the matter ? He roused his companion, the linesman, and the latter, dug out of his bed, stole off amid many mutterings with the first streaks of dawn to ascertain the cause of the breakdown. He jogged along for mile after mile, but there was no sign of a leak or break anywhere on his section ; the wire was as tight as a drum. In the course of a few hours he drew up at the door of the halfway cabin, twenty miles distant, and cut into the wire. He called his mate desperately, but

without avail. Then he tried the next cabin, and got the “ O.K.” There was no doubt about it ; the break was somewhere on his own section, and he must have missed the fault on his outward jaunt.

He turned his horse’s head homewards, and sauntered slowly along, his eye glued to the wire. When he reached home without striking success in his trouble, the operator met him with the remark : “ Why, can’t you find it ? ” The linesman growled menacingly, and consigned the whole telegraph system to perdition, for he was dead-beat, and, disgusted, turned into his bunk.

Early the next morning he was out again, and made another run along the trail to see what was the matter. He arrived at the halfway cabin as before with no luck. Once again he went to call up his mate, and found that he was running to earth. Scratching his head puzzlingly while he stood in the middle of the shack, his eyes wandered round the gloomy abyss within the four wooden walls, and then he gave voice to a healthy curse. There, slung from the stove, was a piece of wire which had been strung up by an ingenious Siwash Indian to form a clothes’ line, and one end of this wire was tangled round the telegraph-wire, giving a “ dead earth.” The dots and dashes which were being poured so valiantly into that wire for London were running into the ground via the stove ! With an oath he pulled down the offending makeshift, and gave another call through. His mate answered instantly. Then, as he explained, he gave full vent to his feelings for a whole five minutes, mounted his horse, and rode off homewards at a gallop with his gun in his hands. It was fortunate for the Siwash that the maddened linesman did not meet him, or there would have been trouble of another description, for the man on the wire rained curses innumerable upon the Red Man’s head, and would assuredly have emphasized them with a hail of shot had the offender

come within sight. That improvised clothes' line had held up the wire for two days, had demanded a ride of eighty miles, and had ruined two nights' peaceful slumber.

Such incidents are a mere interlude to the daily round, however. As a rule the search for trouble is far more grim. Between Hazleton and Prince Rupert the slender link threads heavy country, which is exposed to frequent rainstorms of torrential fury, which play havoc with what is the hardest worked section of the line. This stretch is nearly 200 miles in length. I rode into one of the cabins between Hazleton and Fraser Lake one day, and the operator, heavy-eyed and sleepy, was pounding away at his key for his very life. He had been relaying for some few hours without a break. The night before every man, both operator and linesman, on the stretch between Hazleton and Prince Rupert, had been out in the pelting rain, swathed in heavy slickers and top-boots, trying to fix up the line which had come down at a score or more places. When communication was restored it was found that the Prince Rupert office was simply jammed up with a heap of messages, and as the men who had been out were in urgent need of rest, my friend was called upon to take over the duty of relaying for a few hours.

When the line was first opened only one man was stationed at each cabin, and he had to act both as telegraphist and linesman. The result was somewhat disconcerting at times, as occasionally the operator at a station fell ill, and then there was trouble of another description. One evening an operator between Hazleton and Telegraph Creek endeavoured to call up his chum at the next cabin north. To his dismay he could get no answer, though the line was open. He called and called, wondering what was the matter. Presently there came a slow, long-drawn-out reply. The operator was relating



THE PRIMEVAL AND THE MODERN : OATS AND WILD PEA-VINE GROWING SIDE BY SIDE IN THE BULKLEY VALLEY.

A Yukon telegraph operator, W. Clark, and his "real estate." Farming was practised in his spare time.
The Francois Hills in the background.



that he had been taken ill, and could hardly move the key. The jerks and slowness with which the dots and dashes were rapped out testified to the fact only too plainly that it was serious.

The first operator switched his line through to the next cabin south, intimating the trouble beyond, and that he was off to lend assistance. He had wellnigh twenty miles to go through broken, densely forested country, and to make matters worse the rain was tumbling down in bucketsful. Slipping on his heavy waterproof, jamming a hunk of bannock and bacon in his pocket, and with his gun in his hand, he set off. It was as black as pitch, and he scarcely could keep to the trail, while time after time he made a graceful toboggan along the ground when he stumbled over a deadfall. Such unexpected incidents provoked bruises innumerable, and at last, owing to the darkness, he struck a blind lead. It was some time before he was able to realize that he had missed the trail owing to the blackness of the night, but instinctively he knew he had borne too much to the west, and endeavoured to make up time by crashing through the undergrowth to regain the correct path. As a result he got more tangled up than ever. He had been wandering around for nearly eight hours according to his watch, which was nearly four o'clock in the morning. He was quite lost, but piercing the gloom and spying an eminence rearing above the trees he climbed to its summit in the hope that he might be able to pick up his bearings. He was somewhat familiar with the country, and only required some landmark to regain the trail. To his chagrin when he gained the crest of the knoll he found that his perspective was blotted out by the driving rain. Shivering with the cold, he waited some time, vainly endeavouring to determine his position, but with no luck. He was just on the point of giving up his efforts to pierce the gloom, and about to trust to fate,

when a faint light flickered through the mist about two miles behind him.

It was the cabin, and through missing the trail he had blundered beyond it. He strode off towards this beacon and in less than an hour clicked up the latch. He found the telegraph operator lying in his bunk almost delirious, in a raging fever. Without any delay he called up the station south, explained the situation, and asked for immediate assistance ; then he turned his attention to his companion. It was the hardest night's work he had ever put in according to his own statement, although he had roved the whole country through between Ashcroft and Dawson City. He had no palliatives to his hand wherewith to relieve his raving chum, but he did the best he could until late the next day, when a relief hand and a doctor pulled in. The operator had been knocked over by pneumonia, but not realizing the gravity of his illness had held on uncomplainingly until he collapsed. Under skilled attention he rallied quickly, and a few days later went out for a rest and to recuperate.

The incident which brought about the appointment of two men to each station was one of the most convincing that could have been advanced for achieving an end for which the men had agitated for some time previously. One of the officials was making a journey of inspection over the line, and while riding along one day his horse tripped over the languishing wire of the old Overland telegraph, throwing him so heavily to the ground as to break one of his legs. His companion restored the official as best he could to his saddle, and although suffering excruciating agony, the two made their way with painful slowness to the nearest cabin, intending to call up assistance. They gained the shack, and to their dismay found that the wire was broken down on either side, and that the solitary operator was out looking for the trouble.

The cabin was as isolated as if in the middle of the Sahara. It was useless to wait the operator's return or the restoration of the communication, so getting astride his horse once more, despite the terrible pain it caused, the two pushed on to the next cabin twenty miles away. What the official suffered on that journey only he himself knew, but the climax was reached when the next cabin was gained after a journey of several hours, because here communication was broken on either side through forest fires, and the cabin was just as cut off as the next one north. Fortunately the operator had not started off to repair the trouble, so he was despatched for help as fast as his horse would carry him. While languishing in awful pain, accelerated by the long and aggravating jaunt in the saddle over an exasperating trail, the official vowed that two men should be appointed to every station, so that one man might always be available for any emergency such as this. It dawned upon him that a lonely operator would be in a sad predicament if he met with such an accident under such conditions during his duties. Forthwith each cabin was given an operator and a linesman.

The wages paid to the operators upon a frontier line vary according to the situation. On the Yukon telegraph those engaged on the stretch between the Skeena River and Ashcroft receive a clear £15 per month, with everything found. This country is more accessible than that between the Skeena River and Klondyke, and the life is not so lonely. To make up for these adverse influences, therefore, the operators on the latter section receive a higher salary, averaging about £18 per month, with everything found.

The majority of these operators who have been able to tolerate the lonely life have made good in other directions. The telegraph brought them into the country years before the ordinary settler, speculator, and others who

dabble in the acquisition and disposal of land had learned of its arable fame. In their leisure they scoured round, and staked fine stretches of Canadian freehold at the prevailing figure, and by development have been able to enhance its value very appreciably. More than one operator whom I met had invested the whole of his salary in stretches of farming land, buying it at the lowest figure, and to-day is in a position to command whatever price he cares to demand. The operators have been compelled to combine agriculture with telegraphy in order to occupy their spare moments, which are many and frequent, and more than one has found the job to be a means to an end ; he has brought his holding of land to a fine state of perfection while dwelling in the cabin housing the ticker, so that in a few years he has been able to forsake the " key " for the plough.

CHAPTER IX

THE GAME AND FIRE WARDENS

DURING the past few decades the Dominion Government recognizing that sooner or later Canada, as the pioneer found it, was certain to become nought but a memory, decided to set aside huge stretches of primeval country as reservations or parks, where the indigenous game might be able to roam hither and thither unmolested, and where the hand of improving man would not be allowed to pursue its bent. The policy, though apparently fatuous at the time when the West was still wild and woebegone, to-day is appreciated. Canadians of two or three centuries hence, as well as the people of other countries, will be enabled to catch a glimpse of what it was in the distant past, by wandering through these domains.

The Government has not been at all niggardly in its action. Not acres, but hundreds of square miles, have been railed off for once and for all against development. When the forest has been cleared, and what are now dense tangled masses of timber, become seas of brown earth, stretches of succulent vegetables, or areas of waving corn, these primeval islets will stand out as oases of the hoary past. The most important of these reservations are Algonquin Park in Ontario, of about 2,100 square miles, Jasper Park on the eastern slopes of the Rockies, stretching over 5,000 square miles ; and Banff Park, in the province of Alberta, of 5,732 square miles' area. A more comprehensive idea of the size of these stretches of

Wild Canada may be gathered from the fact that Jasper Park is as large as Belgium, and that it is threaded for nearly fifty miles by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, while Banff Park and Algonquin Park are traversed by the Canadian Pacific and Grand Trunk Railways respectively for mile after mile. Even to-day, although primeval Canada comprises many hundreds of thousands of square miles, the parks are becoming more and more favoured by the public, who have not the desire, or inclination, to wander too far from the beaten track to see Canada as it was presented to the daring pioneers in the earliest days of settlement.

Naturally these reservations have to be patrolled and guarded against those who are always ready to prey upon preserves, because the game therein is always more plentiful and easily obtainable than in the wilds. The denizens of the forest appear instinctively to know that within these stretches of upland, valley, and mountain they are protected from their foes. The poacher, whether two- or four-footed, always regards such areas as happy hunting-grounds, and to guard against such depredations, game-wardens are appointed, whose one object in life is the guardianship of the park, and all that it contains in the way of fur, feather, and fish life.

When the stranger enters these precincts, his firearms are sealed, and on no account whatever is he permitted to break the official embargo upon his weapons within the confines of the park. Fish, likewise, are protected, every disciple of Isaac Walton practising his art in the streams within the boundaries of the reservation having the extent of his catch rigorously limited by law.

The life of the game-warden is probably one of the loneliest that has yet come into vogue as a livelihood. Take Jasper Park for instance. Although it rolls over 5,000 square miles of rugged, thickly wooded country, two men

are responsible for the safety and well-being of all the life. The idea of two men being able to patrol and watch over such a large tract appears absurd, but at the time I traversed the park, the trails through the area were very limited, and could be watched fairly easily. Our party had scarcely entered when the protective official strode up, apparently appearing from nowhere, and, within a few seconds, our firearms were duly sealed in accordance with the law. Having performed his duty the warden, cheered at the sight of a few strange faces, stretched himself on the sward before the camp fire, and regaled us with stories galore concerning his life and adventures. Although dwelling in solitary state, he was the jolliest fellow alive, and certainly the responsibilities of his work and his fight for existence caused him no anxiety. When we resumed our journey, we had not gone fifteen miles when we ran upon his colleague, and had to display our weapons to convince him that the seals were intact still. Had he found them otherwise a fine of £10 and the confiscation of our firearms would have been the penalty.

But the loneliness of the game-warden's life was brought home to us with more poignant vividness as we were dropping down the 350 miles of the Upper Fraser River. We were drifting along with two Indian dug-outs fastened together, *à la catamaran*, when suddenly a blue Peterborough shot out into midstream from beneath the trees overhanging the bank so as to intercept us. It was the game-warden patrolling 350 miles of waterway, flowing through the wildest stretch of New British Columbia. We were in the heart of the moose country, where these animals roam in large numbers, magnificent specimens of which we had seen within a stone's-throw of our craft. Fortunately, we had not drawn upon them for meat, otherwise this official would

have caught us with the goods, and then there would have been something doing.

As we swung towards him the arched back which had been crouching over the paddle bent itself straight, and a pair of vigilant eyes searched our canoes through and through. As we swung by him we gave a cheery "Hallo!" to which there was a monosyllabic response, scarcely more than a guttural, and we were permitted to go on our way. The occupant of the Peterborough bent his arms to the paddle once more, and, driving towards the bank, pulled himself laboriously against stream through the mesh of branches dipping into the water.

He was a pathetic figure. The Peterborough was his home. It was a cramped domicile in very truth, scarcely 14 feet in length, bobbing like a cork float on the sportive waters of the turbulent Fraser, and which braved timber-jam races, rapids, and canyons. In the bow a more or less white heap thrust its ugly protuberance above the thwarts; this was the paddler's home at night—a small tent, housing all his daily requirements in the way of bedding, cooking utensils, and provisions. He kept paddling upstream during the day, and when the shades of evening fell he pulled into an open spot on the bank, made his Peterborough fast by snubbing the painter round a tree-stump, pulled out his tent, rigged it up, piled a camp fire, and cooked his meal, which he devoured in solitary state. For day after day this individual never saw the sight of a human face, unless it happened to be an Indian on the prowl for game. Even this interlude was not frequent, because the Indians took good care to keep out of eyeshot of Roberts, the game-warden. He was as relentless in driving home his duties as any man of his race to be found between the poles, and it would have been difficult to find even a hardened hermit prepared to take on the task of patrolling 350 miles



INSIDE AN ALGONQUIN PARK SHELTER-HOUSE, BUILT FOR THE RANGERS.

R. C. W. Lett.

of such wicked, silent waterway as the Upper Fraser River. He was taciturn, almost to the degree of being dumb; probably the silence of the forest had entered into his soul and had numbed his faculty of speech. He cared no more for the progress of the outside world than the cannibal is captivated by Grand Opera. This warden was marooned worse than any lighthouse keeper—the latter does have the company of a fellow-being in his vigil over the watery wastes, and does receive spells of holiday ashore at regular intervals; but for Roberts there were no such welcome changes. The only variation he ever enjoyed was when he ran up against the fire-warden of the Upper Fraser, who was almost as great a nomad, though he had the company of his wife and child in the crazy-looking dugout.

One of the members of our party on this occasion, Mr. Robert C. W. Lett, a few years before had thrown in his lot with these lonely patrollers, for the purposes of restoring his health. The scene of his activity was in Algonquin Park, some way up in the Highlands of Ontario, and he painted me some very powerful pictures of the life of this official under all varying conditions. Twenty-five rangers were responsible for the maintenance and safety of the animals within this reservation. It seems a small staff in all conscience, especially when it is recalled that this is one of the most popular holiday resorts in Canada. The salary at that time averaged £8 per month, out of which the men were required to board themselves. This does not appear to be a princely remuneration, but it must be remembered that living cost only £1 per month. The wages have since been increased, the present scale being £10 per month, while the board is approximately the same; but after the latter expenditure has been defrayed, there is practically no other outlay beyond tobacco and clothes, which, in

view of the character of the work, do not constitute a very heavy drain upon the financial resources of the wage-earner. He can safely anticipate putting by quite 50 per cent. of his income under normal conditions of living. In addition, each ranger was entitled to one deer, which was "cached" late in the autumn to provide an ample supply of fresh meat during the winter. After the animal had been slaughtered, the offal and parts unfit for human consumption were saved to be soaked with strychnine to be used as bait for the large and ferocious timber wolves, which ravage the park, causing widespread havoc among the deer.

During the summer, life as a game-warden in such a park is enviable to those compelled to drudge in the suffocating and broiling city, because the men spend the whole of their time in the open air, which, bearing in mind the situation and altitude of the reserve, is a most invigorating tonic. Hotels have sprung up at points in close proximity to the Grand Trunk Railway which traverses this national demesne, and during the hot season these hostelries are crowded with visitors. The latter hail with delight an opportunity to get back somewhat to the primitive, and indulge in canoe and other excursions through the park, leading a more or less rough life in tents, or shaking down in the log shelter-huts placed at various points for the benefit of the wardens. Trails have been driven in all directions, many of them leading through lonely and rugged parts of the reservation, where a person without a guide may be easily lost, to pay the penalty for his temerity in essaying to go out alone. Guides are available, however, to steer the tourist through the loneliest, and be it noted, most picturesque corners of the enclosure, and it must be admitted that it would be difficult to conceive a more enchanting holiday than a sojourn in this stretch of

primevalism, for one may wander over the 2,000 odd square miles for weeks, and not see half-a-dozen human faces.

But winter paints quite a different picture. The rivers are frozen up, and the ground is covered to a depth of 3 feet or more of snow. The biting northern winds howl among the trees, and the blizzards rage with terrific fury. The hotels are shut up, and a general atmosphere of desolation rests upon everything. Though the country apparently is closed, the wardens have to be up and doing, as the poacher is on the alert for beaver, mink, and other animals, which he knows thrive in abundance within this sanctuary. To them the chances of securing a good big bag are far more rosy than a quest in the forests beyond the limits of the park. The poacher is a wily individual. He sets his traps in the most impossible situations, and moves to and from the scene of his illicit actions by ways and means which are dark and difficult to follow, taking extreme care that he shall leave no foot-marks in the snow which might lead to his undoing. In addition there are the wolves preying on the deer, which have to be handled. These animals, like the human poachers, have instinctively learned that a prolific feast awaits them within the borders of the park, and they ravage the herds accordingly. The wardens give these parasites very short shrift, resorting to every artifice, no matter how questionable it may seem from the humanitarian point of view, to rid the deer of this implacable enemy.

The wardens can relate many interesting and exciting adventures with this beast, when maddened by hunger to a degree of extraordinary ferocity. Also, life in the park offers many golden opportunities to study animal life at close range; indeed, this constitutes one of the most interesting occupations among the wardens to while away the time. Lett related how one night, during

a short stay at one of the little cabins specially provided to shelter them on their rounds of duty, they heard the peculiar cry which betokens that the chase is on, and that a kill is certain to ensue. In the morning he and his companion started out in the direction from which the wail had been heard the previous night. They soon picked up the trail of the pursued and pursuing animals. The wolves had scented a deer browsing among low-growing cedars, which is this animal's most delectable dainty in winter. Sighting their quarry, they had given vent to a loud howl. The deer, startled, had broken cover to make for the water, which is its instinctive act when disturbed. It was a buck, and the chunks of flesh and masses of hair which the two men found scattered over the white cloth covering the frozen lake, plainly told the tale and the vicious character of the combat. In the chase the wolf is relentless; it springs upon its prey, seizes the inside of the flank with its teeth, and holds on like grim death until it tears a mouthful of flesh from the hunted animal's body or is forced to release its hold. The men measured the bounds of this deer, and found them to vary from 15 to 18 feet in length, while here and there the snow was churned up and darkly stained, showing where a wolf in his spring had alighted upon its prey, and had been bodily dragged along for considerable distances. By following the spoor, the two men at last came upon the scene of the deer's last stand, and found its mutilated carcass. The wolves, after they had despatched their game, had left it, devouring only about 10 pounds of the body, though they had lapped it dry of its life's blood by biting into the throat. Where the wolves wreak such havoc is that frequently they hunt the deer merely for the excitement of the chase, and the desire of killing. During this winter alone, these two wardens found no less than twenty-two animals which

had been killed by wolves, and in every instance only a small portion of the dead animal had been devoured. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the wardens wage a bitter, inexorable warfare against the timber wolves. When mutilated carcasses of their prey are discovered, the abandoned flesh is heavily soured with strychnine and distributed. Sooner or later the bait completes its deadly work, though, unfortunately, in the effort to exterminate the wolves, many innocent foxes, ravens, whisky-jacks—as the Canada jay is colloquially called—and blue jays meet an untimely death by partaking of the poisoned food.

The wardens move hither and thither through the park in pairs. This precaution is taken in the interests of safety, not from fear of the wolves, but in case one man may meet with an accident or be stricken down by illness. In summer the canoe constitutes the principal vehicle for carrying the requirements of the men, as the numerous waterways intersecting the park afford access to the most remote corners. In winter sleds have to be used, and it is no light undertaking hauling a heavy load of impedimenta over the rough ground or through the soft snow. At times the wardens experience hardships of excessive magnitude, battling with the elements or other adversities which rear up at every turn. Lett and his companion on one occasion were making painful tracks for their little cabin near the height of land in the park. Each hauled an Indian sleigh by means of a pair of traces, relieved now and again by a head or shoulder strap. The loads upon the sleighs were heavy as the vehicles were well piled up with provisions, sleeping-bags, cooking utensils, axes, and a few other necessary odds and ends. It was the coldest period of the season, and for three weeks the twain had been making towards the little headquarters on the North River, which is the

head-water of the Muskoka watershed. The weight of the sleighs and softness of the snow alone would have rendered travelling arduous, but when a rough, undulating and timber-strewn country was encountered into the bargain, advance was rather a series of laborious pulls, blind stumbling, and back-racking falls. The day was rapidly closing, and the cabin was almost in sight, when they reached the bank of the North River. This waterway had to be crossed, as the shack was on the opposite shore ; but the question was, How to cross the river. They had half hoped, in view of the low registering of the thermometer, that the water would be frozen sufficiently to enable them to cross on the ice, although they were only too cognizant of the treacherous character of this waterway. It is one of those rivers which is so rough, and rises and falls so quickly that it is perilous to cross in winter, as its ice is rotten and unsafe ; but, to their dismay, when they reached the waterside, the river was quite open and tearing along fiendishly.

They were in a quandary. They had no canoe, and there were no dead dry trees handy with which a raft might be fashioned. Yet they had to get across that night somehow or other. They stacked their sleds and rummaged the adjacent forest for the slightest signs of any wood that might be serviceable for a raft. After much search and considerable time they found six short logs. These were dropped into the water, and a few pieces were laid transversely to hold the fabric together. While his companion turned into the forest to find one more piece of wood, Lett, thinking the crazy craft perfectly safe, stepped aboard with the pole to make the crossing. Unfortunately his moccasins were quicker than he himself ; the frozen soles, coming into contact with another icy surface on the logs, shot his legs out on either side, spreading the logs and letting him through the hole

into freezing water up to his shoulders. Fortunately some bushes were overhanging the waterway, and as he dropped into the water Lett gave a mad clutch at them, thereby preventing the swinging current throwing him into midstream, where swimming would have been of no avail, owing to the velocity of the water and its icy coldness. At this juncture his companion returned, and when he looked down to where the raft had been improvised, he was so surprised to see nothing but Lett's head and shoulders, that he dropped his log. Lett brought him to his senses by asking for a hand out. Dry land regained, Lett shook himself as well as he could, and with his clothes freezing upon him, the scattered logs were regained and the raft re-fashioned, only this time some rope was taken from the sleds to bind the slippery wooden pieces together. The second warden, being a smaller and lighter man, embarked upon the raft this time, poled himself safely across the waterway, and then hurried to the cabin to drag out a small canoe to bring Lett over, the latter meanwhile endeavouring to keep his circulation going in freezing clothes by violent exercise. His companion was certain that his immersion would result in a fatal illness, but it is the luck of the bush that colds are seldom contracted from such duckings so long as one keeps on the move. When the log-hut was gained, a roaring fire soon dried the drenched garments, and restored the warmth to the unfortunate warden's shivering body.

The fire-warden's duties, possibly, are even more strenuous. He is ever on the roam with a keen eye for the slightest outbreak of the fire-fiend, which wreaks such widespread damage among the timber wealth of the country. When the summer is hot and dry, his life is an exciting and exhausting round of toil. He may be out for days and nights fighting a bush conflagration,

summoning assistance whence he can. He has the authority to call upon one and all who chance to be within hail to help him in his task. Refusal is criminal, and brings a heavy fine with possible imprisonment. Travellers through a country are sometimes dismayed to find the fire-warden enforcing his authority with all the austerity of the old press-gang, but there is no alternative ; one must buckle to and lend a hand. This power has provoked some humorous situations at times ; for instance, a company of actors had been despatched up-country by an enterprising firm of cinematograph play-producers to enact a back-woods play before the camera, the idea being to secure the local colouring to perfection. While they were in the midst of their work, obeying the stentorian behests of the stage-manager, a smoke-begrimed and tattered fire-warden burst upon the scene. Every man in the company was ordered to "quit play-acting and to give a hand in putting out the bush fire." The actors remonstrated, but in vain. Opposition to the common enemy of the country was far more important than getting a film to amuse the thousands in the cities. The warden hustled them up, threatening to prosecute one and all with the utmost rigour of the law if they did not answer his call, and quickly too, as time was pressing, and permitting the fire to secure a firmer hold. Those performers were kept hard upon a most uncongenial task for several hours on end, and when their services at last were dispensed with, they presented a sorry-looking and exhausted mass of humanity ; then the most amused individual was the warden himself, and his laughter provoked threats of terrible reprisals for interfering with a lawful occupation. A complaint was duly lodged with the authorities by the aggrieved artists, together with a claim for damages, but, laughing up their sleeves, the authorities pointed out that the warden was acting quite



AN IMPERATIVE DUTY : RANGER BRINGING IN THE FIREWOOD FOR A SHELTER-HUT
IN ALGONQUIN PARK.

R. C. W. Lett.

within his powers, and if actors and actresses were content to penetrate into such a country, they must run the risk of the country's luck. Occupation or social position cannot be taken into consideration in such desperate circumstances ; when the bush fire is raging the millionaire travelling in the vicinity can be impressed as much as the unkempt hobo or tramp.

Keeping a vigilant eye upon the game during the winter and frustrating the knavish tricks of the wily poacher constitute a welcome interlude to the normal daily round of the park-keeper. There are a few old-time trappers still, who trod the trails intersecting this reservation years before it was ever railed off for the benefit of the public, and before the inmates of the animal kingdom were brought under the protective wing of the Government. These worthies occasionally forget this latter circumstance, as well as the situation of the boundary lines, and, wandering within the preserve, secure a few beaver or mink with their metal traps ; but the professional poacher is far more cunning ; he knows the strength of the forces of the guardians of the animals, the fact that they patrol the area in couples, and that they have an extensive stretch of diversified country to cover. He also knows their trails and shelter-huts. Accordingly, he steals through the bush, leaving the paths severely alone, and in this manner the prints of his snow-shoes are difficult to trace. By gaining asylum in the dense thickets the poacher is often passed unobserved within a yard by the rangers, and is able to complete his nefarious work. But Nemesis in this instance has a long arm. The warden is at liberty to arrest any character whom he suspects of poaching, within a mile of the boundaries of the park, and accordingly many a poacher who has secured a good illicit haul within the reservation has met his deserts beyond the fence.

The Government is devoting more attention to the class of men suited for this peculiar work. Although the life seems terribly lonely, there is no dearth of applicants. It is excellent training, and the greater number of the rangers have turned their drilling in the woods to excellent account for improving their positions in life. It affords excellent scope for mastering the intricacies of woodcraft, reading and cutting trails, studying the habits, manners, and peculiarities of wild animals at close quarters, as well as becoming fitted for detective work. The motto "Never turn back, but get to your objective at all costs" is the guiding aphorism, and the men act up to it fully. The life appears to be selfish, for the only cares presenting themselves to the rangers are avoiding accidents, patrolling conscientiously, and providing from Nature's larder for the next meal. The men enjoy the life thoroughly, and confess that it leaves nothing to be desired. The call of the wild becomes so deeply rooted that, although many of the men at times long for the glare, glitter, and bustle of the "Great White Way" of the city, and abandon the wilderness for commercial activity in civilization's maelstrom, they invariably return to the tall, silent timbers, within a few months.

CHAPTER X

NAVYING AND RAILWAY BUILDING

THE West to-day offers great attractions for unskilled labour, or rather for that class of labour which experiences great difficulty to secure steady and continuous employment under normal circumstances in crowded centres. This demand is emphasized most potently in connection with railway constructional operations, the foundation of new towns, the building of streets, and so on, where the requisitions for skill are confined to the manipulation of the pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. Railway building is exceptionally active, and will continue to be the first magnet to attract labour for many years to come, as the steel highway is essential in development work. Arrangements have been completed for building several hundred miles of lines to criss-cross the country in all directions, the greatest undertaking of this character being the completion of the second and third transcontinental railways. One, the Grand Trunk Pacific, is rapidly approaching completion, there being only a gap of about 300 miles in the heart of New British Columbia to be closed to provide a continuous steel highway 3,556 miles in length from the Atlantic to the Pacific seaboard. The third transcontinental, the Canadian Northern, at the moment is engaged busily upon its mountain section of 600 odd miles from Port Mann, near Vancouver, to the Yellowhead Pass. These two enterprises alone will command the services of 10,000 men,

fit and able to use the above-mentioned tools. In addition, the Canadian Pacific Railway is pursuing an active branch-line policy to tap new and promising districts, as well as the improvement of its existing system to meet the spirited competition which is developing.

In the Great West navvying may be considered as being the most steady form of employment, because the work is pursued uninterruptedly upon such tasks as railway construction, the whole year through, irrespective of the elements and seasons. The grader, as he is called, is a hard worker, but the pay taken on the whole is adequate for the hire. East of the Rockies it averages about 8s. per day ; between the Rockies and the Pacific seaboard, where labour is somewhat scarcer, the remuneration is proportionately higher, as much as 12s. a day being offered a man in return for the sweat of his brow. The reason is that keen competition for brawn and muscle prevails in the latter new country. During the summer in Northern British Columbia the navy has no difficulty to earn as much as twenty shillings per day when accompanying prospecting and developing expeditions.

The navy's life in the West is vastly different from that which obtains in the Old World. Here a man can look forward only to a weekly income between 21s. and 25s. per week, and it is a precarious livelihood at that. Then a third of this wage approximately has to be expended on rent, so that precious little is left to keep body and soul together. Contrast this condition of affairs with a similar situation in Western Canada. The wages average from 40s. to 45s. for a six-day week, and fully one half of this amount is available to the worker to spend as he pleases. There is no deduction for rent, as the grader shakes down in the camp's bunk-house. Living expenses absorb about 21s. per week, being an average of 1s. per meal, or 3s. per day. The only remaining

essential expenditure is the deduction of 1s. per week, which is levied as a contribution towards medical attention, and this entitles the man to the services of a physician and the supply of medicine during illness, as well as entry into the camp-hospital with attention in cases of accident. The outlay over and above these two sums is governed entirely by the caprices and temperament of the worker. Clothes made for wear, and not appearance, are the order of the day ; alcoholic drink, except in very few instances, is not to be obtained for love or money except surreptitiously and illegally, owing to the prohibition law, so that the worker cannot fritter away his money in excesses. Tobacco is practically the sole form of enjoyment, unless one except cards and gambling, which, for some inscrutable reason, appear to be inseparable from the Canadian navy's life.

The navy's existence, taken on the whole, is enjoyable. The men are not so isolated or lonely as one might imagine at first sight. The railway camps are strung out over a distance of 100 or 150 miles, and are about two miles apart. Each little community may number from forty to 200 souls or more. The buildings are as comfortable as massive logs and moss-chinking, together with the assistance of a wood-burning stove in winter can make them. The bunk-house is snug, with the beds or bunks set out in a row on either side of a central gangway and in two tiers. The mattresses are composed of thin willow-poles laid longitudinally, covered with a thick layer of balsam boughs or loose hay and blankets. At one camp the contractor indulged the men to an extreme degree. The bunk-house was equipped with single iron bedsteads and blankets, while a special man was deputed to attend to the sleeping accommodation and the drawing of hot and cold water for washing purposes, so that when the men returned at night they might be able to perform their

ablutions without having "to pack" the hot or cold water. This, however, was an extreme exception.

The men are torn from their slumbers about six o'clock in the morning by the clanging of the cook's gong—a triangular piece of steel fashioned from a bar about an inch in diameter, beaten with a steel rod. Tumbling out of their berths, the men hurriedly don their attire, and, armed with soap and towels, scurry away down to the creek, beside which the camp is pitched, to have a wash in the crystal refreshing water. Violent drubbing with the towel brings a healthy glow to the cheeks, and then there is a scamper into the dining-hall, which is another log-dwelling, to do justice to a substantial meal. It is safe to say that very few navvies in the Old World can point to such good square meals as their comrades receive in a Canadian railway-camp. There is a round of oatmeal or mush, followed by meat and vegetables in plenty, with a wind-up of pie in variety. Without the mush and pie no Canadian navy would think of starting out upon his day's work. Pork and beans invariably figure on the menu, as they form an excellent support to Little Mary when the toil is hard and exhausting in the rock-cut or the sand-pit.

Breakfast finished, the men scatter to their stations on the grade, and by the stroke of seven have bent their backs to their jobs, continuing without interruption until midday. The blare of whistles precipitates a stampede to the dining-room once more, as the keen virgin air and the grinding work produces a big appetite, which is assuaged by bowls of steaming soup, with a following of meat and vegetables, pork and beans, or fish. Stewed fruit and rice, the inevitable pie, bread in plenty, and cheese help to provide a substantial foundation for the afternoon's work, which is started at one o'clock.

There is another five hours' pull with the tools until

the screech of the sirens at six o'clock sounds cessation of work for the day. The men, as a rule, have a good wash and brush-up on the banks of the creek, and then file into the dining-hall for the third and last meal, which, in point of variety and substance, compares with the midday repast. The camps are well stocked with provisions of a most assorted character, which, though canned, are invariably of a most tasty description. The only liquors permitted are lime-juice, which is drunk liberally to nullify the effects of the preserved comestibles impregnated with salt, and thus tends to counteract the chances of an outbreak of scurvy, together with tea and coffee *ad lib.*, with as much sugar and milk as fancy dictates.

The meats are not exclusively of the canned variety, however. These are regarded more in the light of reserve provisions. When the camps have settled down steadily to work, facilities are provided whereby the men are insured a steady supply of fresh meat, cattle being driven along the route and killed at suitable points for distribution among the scattered communities. In one instance the builders of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway contracted for the supply of no less than 5,000 head of cattle in the course of one year. These animals had to be driven in huge droves for over 600 miles across country to the most central point among the camps. On the Skeena River the contractors set up a large slaughter-house, and the meat as dressed was conveyed down the waterway to a cold storage, which likewise was specially erected to hold the food in plenty for distribution wherever required, so that there was little possibility of the men running short of fresh meat. The contractors have learned from experience that a good meat diet is essential to enable the labourers to withstand the hard gruelling of five hours' steady and unrelenting toil,

throwing earth and rock about to make way for the parallel bands of steel.

When a camp is established, as a rule the community can rely upon being settled there for eighteen months or two years. The grade is driven outwards from the camp on each side to meet the highway similarly driven from the adjacent camp on either hand. Under these circumstances the men can add to their diet by growing vegetables and ingredients for salads, which form a welcome change to the canned articles of diet. As a matter of fact, a large number of men turn their leisure time to cultivating small patches when the soil is suitable, and the succulent lettuces, spring onions, and radishes are devoured with ill-disguised relish.

After the evening meal the men while away the time according to individual inclinations. As a rule, a couple of hours are beguiled in lounging, reading, and smoking, or indulgence in some hobby, the arrival of nine o'clock seeing the majority making way to the bunks for a well-earned rest.

Sunday is a blank day, the one day's rest in seven being rigidly enforced, except when rush-work such as the building of a steel bridge which is holding up the advance of the track-layer, is necessary. In the morning the banks beside the little creek are busy with the navvies carrying out their laundry duties, for every man has to complete his own washing, which, although not extensive is yet imperative in the interests of health—that is, if the wage-earner is alive to the advantages of hygiene. In the afternoon many will wander off to visit pals in other camps, go out on a hunt for “b'ar” or any other game in the forests, while others, with a rod fashioned from a willow-branch, a few feet of cord, and a hook, will ensconce themselves in shady nooks to indulge in the Waltonian art. Visitors stray in from neighbouring



GANG LAYING METALS FOR THE GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY BETWEEN
KITSELAS AND HAZLETON.



Harry Wrathall.

TYPICAL CAMP FOR NAVVIES PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTORS BUILDING THE
GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY.

camp, and around the camp fire peals of laughter will ring out over anecdotes and reminiscences. The average grader is a born raconteur, and many and varied are the stories which he can reel off concerning his own experiences or those of people whom he has met. Then various institutions, such as the Young Men's Christian Association and Bible Missions pursue active campaigns for the improvement of the mind, not with vapid discourses upon the differences between heaven and hell, or an endeavour to lead the rough diamonds from the latter to the former upon orthodox principles, but in homely talk in which religion is well veiled. Sometimes a "frock" attached to one or other of the various denominations will appear in the camp and will make a special pleading for some purpose or other. Such strangers invariably meet with a hearty welcome, especially if they are expert in preparing the mental pabulum for such strange flocks. The services are as unlike those connected with religious enterprises as it is possible to imagine. The shepherds for the most part have a wealth of stories which they relate, seizing every opportunity to drive home the moral unconsciously. If the preacher is a "great stiff," his work will not be in vain, for the navy is hearty and liberal in his response to the call for financial assistance. Woe betide the grumbler who displays hostility to the collection-plate, or is niggardly in his contributions thereto. His comrades have their own way of bringing him to his senses, and making him see eye to eye with them in supporting the preacher's claims.

Of course some temperaments cannot be held in check ; the prohibition law hits such worthies hard, as it means that they have got to make a weary and expensive journey of perhaps 200 miles to gratify their desires for a carousal. They set off with a substantial wad of dollar bills representing several months' hard-earned wages, strike the

nearest licensed town, paint it red the first night, get pitchforked into some dive by the human vultures always on the sharp lookout for such prey, are robbed of everything, and then are compelled to return to the scene of their former labours as best they can, probably borrowing the where-withal from the contractors to regain the camp, and having it deducted from their wages when the latter are due.

Yet steady workers have no difficulty in improving their positions. There always is room higher up if a man has the capacity to occupy the vacant post. I have met several who started picking and shovelling on the grade at two dollars a day, but who soon climbed the ladder to become timekeepers at £14 per month all found, foremen, and so on. Sir N. D. Mann is a case in point. It was not many years ago that he was gruelling on the grade and tumbling sleepers about for less than two dollars a day; now he is one of the moving spirits in the third trans-continental railway. Many of the contractors handling large jobs in the West, when they grow reminiscent, will relate how they struggled hard at the worst work on the grade for a few shillings to eke out a miserable existence as it was then.

As a matter of fact, there is no reason why a navvy should remain a mere navvy if he has any initiative and pluck, as well as being thrifty. A few months' work and its accumulated equivalent in coin is a positive stepping-stone to better and more remunerative occupation. The contractors are always disposed to let out stations, as the lengths of 100 feet into which the grade is divided are termed, on contract or piece-work. They let the job for a certain price, and their profit is represented in the difference between what they receive for the task and what they pay the piece-worker. A man with less than £15 can get a start as a subcontractor. He will either recruit his labour himself, paying the usual wage, or in

turn will put his men upon piece-work rates, and will take a hand in it himself. Maybe the station is easy, requiring practically no plant beyond a few planks, picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows. The chief contractors will let out these requisitions to him at a low rate. The subcontractor can only hope to make the job remunerative to himself by getting it through at high pressure, and he accordingly spares no effort to bring about such a consummation. A man toiling on piece-work will put more effort into ten hours than a man who is content to draw a day's pay, and without any ambition to better his position. Accordingly, the contractors foster "subbing." It means that the job is completed in shorter time than is possible with day-labour, and it is immaterial to them how much the subcontractor makes or loses over the job, so long as it is carried out in accordance with specifications. The Scotsmen are particularly keen upon subcontracting, and many working upon the co-operative principle to complete a station, have cleared substantial sums as a result of their enterprise.

This tendency is responsible for reckless plunging at times ; the man thinks that he can see his way to make a good thing out of a station or two, and although it may involve the laying out of perhaps several hundred pounds in plant, he will embark cheerfully upon the enterprise with a capital, perhaps, of only £30 or £40. If fortune is kind, and he works hard, and knows how to set about the task, he pulls through all right and smiles satisfactorily as he draws a fat cheque and weighs up the balance representing profit on the transaction. If he comes a cropper, he turns over the unfortunate station to the contractors and resumes work at a daily wage until he has amassed a few more pounds, with which to feel his feet and try his luck anew.

Subcontracting does not involve the quotation of a

lump sum for the completion of a station. Such a system is impossible, as no one can tell what is lurking beneath the surface of the ground. Maybe what looks like soft soil may spring a surprise in the form of slippery clay, or dense rock, demanding skilled labour for blasting. The subcontractor works upon the payment by cubic yard basis. The engineers have plotted the path of the line, and it demands the removal of so much material to fashion the pathway, either from the spot to drive a cutting, or from a ballast-pit to build up an embankment. The *débris* is divided into three ratings. Ordinary soil is classified as "common"; earth associated with stones and small boulders as "loose rock"; while that requiring the aid of explosives is known as "solid rock." The first named receives the lowest payment because it is the easiest to handle, and requires practically no tackle; the latter receives the highest pay, as it demands first-class skill in boring and handling the explosives, while the second named receives a price between the two. The subcontractor's work is measured by the engineers, who also decide what is essential to this end in accordance with the specifications, and for this total the man is paid. If he has removed too much spoil, then his labour has been in vain, and he must pocket his loss; this is practically where the risk comes in, especially in rock, but if a man is careful he will not err on the side of doing too much work; it is his own fault if he does.

The winter is possibly the worst period for the navvy; then he is often imprisoned virtually by an encircling wall of snow-bound forest, more effective as a barrier than steel bars. With the thermometer down so low that to pick up an iron bar with the naked hand is to produce a blister, and with the blast so keen that it cuts like a knife unless furs and woollen clothing are liberally donned, it requires some pluck to sally out into the rock-cut.

In these islands navvying is regarded practically as being on the lowest rung of human endeavour, but in the Dominion, where the moulding process is still being actively pursued, the navvy is regarded as an indispensable unit. Without him the foundations of the country cannot be laid, and for this very reason the task is regarded as a positive stepping-stone to better things, provided the wielder of the pick and shovel has an average amount of enterprise and brains. As a matter of fact, although he may arrive in the country with no more ambition than a tramp, this faculty soon becomes kindled and developed under the spurring effort of his pals' successes, so that he labours to attain greater heights on the ladder of success himself.

CHAPTER XI

FRONTIER JOURNALISM

It must be confessed that Canada holds out very indifferent inducements to the representative of the press. Probably it is *the* one profession to receive the scantiest reward, although the work is far harder than that required to make good in any other field of activity. The free-lance or penny-a-liner has a most precarious existence ; reporting is drudgery of the worst type, and rewarded with starvation remuneration ; while the editorial staff by no means receive princely wages. This is undoubtedly the reason why there are so few accomplished journalists in the Dominion, and why the newly-arriving scribe, who, by the way, is as rare as snow in summer, inevitably shakes the dust of Canada from his feet for the field of operation next door, or else renounces the "Fourth Estate" and plunges into some other and more promising vocation.

If the journalist is resolved to stick to his pencil and notebook, he can succeed only in one way—by establishing his own paper. If he is smart, simultaneously he will lay the foundation of his own fortune. At first sight this seems a tall undertaking, but only so when viewed through the glasses of British practice. In Canada, a capital of £10, a small printing-press, and an average amount of "go" will place the newspaper owner more firmly on the road of success than £100,000 expended for the same purpose in the City of London, or any other provincial centre.

To achieve success in this direction one must get away from the older parts of Canada, where newspaperdom offers no attraction whatever. One must follow Horace Greeley's advice, "Go West," and, moreover, get as far West as possible, where new territories are being opened up every day, where the settlers are pouring in by the hundred to till the land, and where the speculator is running right and left, snapping up every acre that he can find. This is the journalist's Eldorado, where money is made quickly and rapidly.

A newspaper in the bush, several hundred miles from the nearest town, without railway, telephone, or telegraph communication, appears a hopeless centre for such enterprise ; but in one and all of these vortices of hustle a newspaper is as certain to exist as the bakery and the two-shilling-a-meal restaurant down the street. The newspaper arrives on the scene before the foundations of the little community are laid ; when, possibly, the town does not number a hundred souls all told ; when the only street is tenanted by less than half a dozen shops in tents ; and when the opportunities for a news-sheet are about as uninviting to the Old-World eye as a skin-dressing factory. Certainly there is no evidence of a circulation to support the undertaking, inasmuch as probably half a dozen copies would more than meet the requirements of those in the place.

The chances are a hundred to one that the town has not even a name when the newspaper is planted, consequently the sheet cannot be christened after the scene of its birth for the purposes of identification ; but the proprietor rises to the occasion. Trifles such as titles do not worry him. Perhaps there is something or other prominent in the locality after which the newspaper can be called, and on which the proprietor seizes for his purposes. For instance, at the lower end of the famous canyon on

the Skeena River the town of Kitselas sprang up. The inevitable journalist, an Englishman, appeared on the scene in the early days, but the prospect of the *Kitselas Times* or some other such commonplace appellation made no impression upon him. He wanted something out of the common, and so he brought the canyon to his aid and forthwith christened his little sheet *The Big Canyon Weekly*. When the new port of Prince Rupert was established on the Canadian seaboard, and everyone arriving was bubbling over with the feeling that the port was destined to become the "roarin'st," place on the Pacific coast north of the Equator, the first newspaperman took up the prevailing note and called his production *The Optimist*, which, in view of the buoyant enthusiasm, was most apt. Since those early days the place has shaken down into its rut, along which the world's affairs rumble, and the former title has been changed to the more prosaic *Daily News*.

The Western Canadian member of the Fourth Estate differs radically from his colleague in the humdrum Old World. He is a man who grabs opportunity with a pretty big hand, and regards the publication of a newspaper to meet the public requirements in just the same light as the baker turning out rolls and dough-nuts. Maybe he has never been identified previously with the press, and knows no more about literary construction than a tortoise does about mathematics. Very often it is his first venture into the troublous waters of journalism, but he has no thought of the obstructions ahead. He will run the paper just as long as it pays him; and when he begins to lose money he will drop it, to bash floorboards down the street, throw in his lot with a pack-train, or go off as chainman or axeman with a survey party. Only so long as anything to which he turns his hand brings in the dollars is he content; he will follow that



RAILWAY NAVVIES COMING IN TO THE MIDDAY MEAL.

In this case meals are served in the train of old cars on the right.

pursuit just so long as the profit and loss account shows a satisfactory balance in his favour.

The very last thing which these organs of public opinion attempt to publish is news. Information of what the world at large is doing makes no impression upon a community isolated in the wilderness. They do not care if the whole of Europe is at war, or whether the British Islands have been wiped out of existence by a mighty upheaval of Nature. They are engaged in working out their own destinies without any assistance from outside, and consequently the latter is left to its own machinations and devices so far as they are concerned.

How do these news-sheets exist ? One may naturally ask such a question if they do not rely upon their obvious *raison d'être* and circulation for existence. The solution is not difficult to seek. They come into existence mainly because indirectly they are stimulated by the Government. The law runs that when a person stakes an area of land for his own or anybody else's benefit, intimation of the fact must be given to all and sundry by an advertisement in the *Government Gazette*, and also in the paper published nearest the district in which the staked claim is situate. What does the budding newspaper proprietor do to improve his situation and bank-balance ? He keeps a sharp eye on the wheels of progress, observes which stretches of the country are showing signs of looming large in the public eye in the near future, where there is likely to be a rush for land, and ere the boom sets in he is established in the heart of the new territory. He is in the van of the stampede of land-speculators, boosters, pioneers, and stakers. He gets his press going, and the first issue of his enterprise is rushed out without delay. Possibly the initial number is no larger than a sugar-bag, and of four pages, filled up with clippings of interesting information from other papers, with the lines set widely

apart and in big type, so as to reduce the cost and labour of type-setting to a nominal figure. The chances are a thousand to one that the first issue does not carry a single advertisement, and when the second issue is going to appear—well, no one knows ; that depends upon circumstances.

This is the commencement of a bush newspaper, and from that day forward, if the boom in the neighbourhood continues, the proprietor has no apprehensions whatever about the future. Before long the excited speculators and stakers hurry their claims into the Government offices, and the intimation of what they have fenced off is duly advertised in the *Government Gazette*, and automatically in the columns of the newly-established local paper. The owner and editor does not stir a finger to help himself ; the advertisement revenue is as certain to run into his coffers as the tide ebbs and flows. As the country goes ahead, the pages of advertisements steadily and persistently increase, until at the height of the boom the local news-sheet bears a greater resemblance to an issue of the *London Gazette* than to a newspaper. The news items are difficult to discover ; they are probably tucked away here and there in vacant spaces among the advertisements. The proprietor as a rule will endeavour to justify his position by writing a glaring leader under the title of "What we Think"—the editorial plural is religiously upheld by the single-handed editor and owner, even in the bush—but this leader invariably will take the line of boosting the possibilities and glories of the surrounding country in such a flamboyant manner as to cause a stranger, picking up the paper in a distant town, to conclude that he has a chance to enter paradise at last.

Enterprise and aptitude to seize the opportunity are the only requirements for the journalist in the West. A little capital will carry him a very long way. He will take

in a small hand or foot press, a compact assortment of types, and a sufficient supply of paper. He will get this outfit into the new hive of industry by hook or by crook, and upon arrival at once either will establish himself in a tent, or, if there is time, will run up a small timber shack to accommodate his stock-in-trade, with the printing-plant installed in one cupboard, and a smaller box to serve as the editorial sanctum.

At first he will have "to kick out his paper" as best he can by himself, since probably lack of labour and dearth of capital will militate against the employment of assistance. A printer in a frontier town is a delightful luxury. The chances are that he will decline to pick up his stick for less than £1, and more often than not will command £1 10s. per diem. The founder of the *Prince Rupert Optimist* related to me that he came into the port almost with the first boatload of settlers. His boxes contained his plant, and he rushed them to the spot he had selected for his premises, hurriedly got it going, and within a few hours was busy bustling out his first issue, alone and unaided.

The journalist under such conditions must be conversant with every phase of the handicraft, from the wielding of the editorial pen and blue pencil to the setting of copy and the actual printing of the sheet. Needless to say, the newspaper does not assume the proportions of those to which the Old World is accustomed. As a rule, it measures about 10 inches by 12 inches, and in its infancy is merely a folded paper of four pages. But as the advertisements respecting the land claims roll in, the number of pages increases rapidly. One paper, which I have in my possession, extends over twenty-four pages of the above dimensions, and it contains merely one column of news on the front page, following a piece of the editor's mind in the form of a leader of thirty lines.

Although the newsy side of the paper is so meagre, it is very doubtful if that small contribution ever is read. The office generally is thronged on publishing day by townspeople and others, and they scan the advertisements with the greatest avidity. Everyone in the community is probably land mad, and the chances are a thousand to one that each one either has staked already a tract of upland country, has an eye upon a favourable stretch, or is interested in a speculation. The advertisements inform the one whether his claim has been filed, or if the land had been staked previously ; the second learns whether the area he covets is still open ; while the third is kept *au fait* regarding general land-sales and developments.

I met one young fellow who had just struggled 150 miles up-country with a small press, cases of type, ink, and paper. He was not really a journalist, he said ; in fact, he did not quite know what his real occupation was, because he had tried his hand at so many things. However, this was not his first experience in newspaper enterprise. He had started a "rag" some four years before nearer the International Boundary. That was founded quite by accident. He had pushed into the district just when the boom was commencing, and in the course of idle conversation learned that the absence of a newspaper was deplored by those in the town, as they had to wait two days before they could get the *Government Gazette* to read the land advertisements. The fact gave him an idea : he would fill the blank. He hurried off to Vancouver, bought up a small second-hand printing outfit cheap, and in less than a week the new community, sighing for a local news-sheet, had its ambition fulfilled. From this humble beginning the property grew and thrived, until at last it attained the proportions of a dignified newspaper, fulfilled its legitimate sphere, and published the latest news *in extenso*, with about eight pages of advertise-

ments of a varied orthodox description: in short, became an established property of great value. When another town loomed above the firmament of commerce some 150 miles farther north, the young proprietor trekked once more with his portable printing outfit, and within a few weeks his second newspaper was born, and likewise was set upon such a firm foundation that it prospered rapidly.

But it is not every news-sheet which is founded that weathers the vicissitudes of Fortune, and is able to feel its feet within a few months. The town may hang fire; instead of becoming an "is-er," as the westerner terms a new community which is forging ahead to occupy a prominent position upon the map, it may rot into a "was-er," signifying a town which has missed fire almost before it was born; or the land boom in the country around may "peter out." Then the news-sheet, which appeared with such a flourish of trumpets, dies a sudden death; the proprietor, with what shekels he can rake together, closes his shack, and steals away to try his hand at some other more promising occupation. If he is a journalist to the manner born, he will simply slaughter his publication, pack up his stock-in-trade, and hie off as fast as he can go to the next community which is commencing to rise in the bush. There he will plant himself, and another news-sheet will be born.

Editorial life in the wilderness is entirely free from that physical strain and constant "watching for scoops" which is so characteristic of the profession in the teeming city. The famous sanctum in the wooden shanty is vacant for many days of the week, and the moulder of public opinion may be seen lounging in his shirt-sleeves around the bar of the saloon (if the community is not in the dry district) or killing time at some other more or less harmless occupation. He may even be out fishing, hunting, or staking land either for himself or other interests.

There is no hustle to get the paper out in time ; an hour, or even half a day, late makes no difference.

Under such conditions journalism is rather pleasant than otherwise, free from nerve-racking anxiety to be first in the field, and with no Damoclean sword in the form of dismissal if a contemporary gets ahead. The action of the Government concerning the procedure in regard to land-staking advertisements appears somewhat as a method of subsidizing the press indirectly, and it pays the enterprising spirits settling down miles from anywhere to wield the mighty pen, though it must be confessed that the pen does not perform a very serious mission in life.

As the town grows and the surrounding bush becomes opened up, the responsibilities of the local newspaper increase proportionately. If the journalist rises to the occasion, he profits accordingly. The residents, shaking down to the normalities of life, and having survived the first boom of speculation, evince a growing interest in what is happening beyond the limits of their little world. The change in the demeanour of the townsfolk is at once reflected in the newspaper. Items of outside news appear in the columns in the form of brief telegrams. Here conciseness is made manifest in its more approved form, mainly because the telegrams are expensive, and the proprietor is not inclined to assume too big a financial risk in the acquisition of telegraphic information. But as the development becomes appreciated, he opens out, and gradually the news-sheet emerges from the chrysalis form into a publication of the familiar type. By this time probably it will have become firmly set on its feet, and henceforward will continue the even tenor of its existence upon conventional lines. On the other hand, the transition may prove fatal, and before the languishing idea can run away with very much money to no advantage, the proprietor "cuts out and quits," and the

Yorkton Yeller comes to an undignified, unostentatious end.

Many of the most powerful papers holding sway over the affairs of Government and men in the Dominion to-day started from such humble beginnings, especially in those flourishing towns and cities which have been created during the past half-century. Personality has considerable influence upon the success of such a news-sheet in its earliest days, and so long as the founder is connected intimately with his charge, so long will the latter flourish. Somehow or other, a newspaper which starts with the growth of a new town, and maintains a firm go-ahead policy, never loses its grip upon the citizens among whom it was born. It becomes one of the traditions of the town. It may change its title as time goes on, and may assume a new garb ; but so long as the fundamental characteristics are retained, the first-comer has little to fear from competition.

CHAPTER XII

LIFE IN A FRONTIER TOWN

IF one desires to get a real taste of Canadian life as it was known half a century or more ago, and to indulge in pioneering work, with all its excitement and fascination, as well as being able to take money quickly, then the frontier town is an ideal centre. There is something peculiarly magnetizing about a small community pursuing the even tenor of its way, and working out its own destiny, two or three hundred miles away from the click of the telegraph and the throbbing of the railway locomotive. Under such conditions unique opportunities open up for the display of ingenuity and master-strokes of policy, while the chances for making a good deal are without a parallel.

The men who establish those remote new towns are a people apart. They are the slowly disappearing remnants of that race who tamed, not only the wildest parts of Canada, but the most inaccessible corners of the United States as well, in the days when railways remained to be built. They are sturdy, self-reliant, and happy-go-lucky specimens of humanity, taking long chances, and never so content as when they are severed from civilization's apron-strings. Town-building is their hobby, and when at last the railway and telegraph creep up to the front-door, these worthies steal off through the back portal, trek across country, select another attractive isolated site, and once more set to work at rescuing a tract

of bush from primevalism, and turning it into a throbbing hive of activity. I struck one frontier town far removed from the railway, which was going ahead with amazing speed. Down at the lower end of the main street two waitresses were catering for the needs of the pioneers. They came up with the first wave of invasion, when the builders of Empire were still engaged in razing the forest to the ground to make way for the streets and buildings of the metropolis of to-morrow. How they got up no one seemed to know, but they had roughed it considerably in so doing. When they reached their destination they took over a shack recently completed, at a nominal rent, with the option to purchase the freehold by instalments. They laid out the whole of their slender capital to advantage, and on the first morning they opened up for the benefit of the town at large they served 175 meals at 2s. per head. The first day netted them a gross return of nearly £50, and although the majority of the customers had to sit upon the ground outside, with their plates between their crossed legs, and had to provide their own cutlery in the form of the indispensable jack-knife, using fingers as a fork, nobody grumbled. It was characteristic of the life. Those two girls never looked back. At the end of the first month they had acquired the freehold of their premises, paying off the purchase price in a single instalment, and the bank up the street could point to a good balance in their favour on the right side of the profit and loss account.

When I reached the town after a prolonged imprisonment in the wilds with the pack-train, my hirsute appendage would have been envied by the most popular virtuoso. But, unlike the latter, I was anxious to rid myself of this decoration. There was a tonsorial artist in Main Street, and in company with my companions who were burdened with a similar superfluous adornment, we ten-

dered our custom. The artist was out. He was nailing down floorboards for a fellow-citizen at two shillings an hour over yonder, but would be back later, as his Chinese underling explained. We returned in an hour, but with little success. The barber was busy fixing up a watch, the mainspring of which had gone awry, while the other mechanical parts of the timepiece were unable to operate owing to the presence of dust. We waited. At last the artist appeared on the scene, and we were shorn at 4s. a head. That barber knew no more of his craft than a mouse does about running a cheese factory. He might have tried a hand at clipping a horse, and would have done himself better justice. At all events that was the only hair-cutting tool about which he knew anything, and in about ten minutes he turned us out of his shack, with heads so cleanly shaven that had we been at home we should have been held up as escaped convicts. He had offered to give us a shave, which we needed sadly, but the experience under the clippers caused us to apprehend the manipulation of the razor with ill-concealed trepidation. Floorboard-setting, hair-cutting, and watch-mending appear to be a strange combination of occupations, but the man was meeting with success. Hair-cutting was slack during the day, so he was quite ready to improve the vacant hours in any other industrial direction for which there might be a demand and adequate remuneration !

The storekeeper flourishes excellently. He has the entire population at his mercy. If one is dissatisfied with his goods and exorbitant charges, one must order requirements through the post from some cheaper provider in the great cities. But the mail facilities in a frontier town are as uncertain as an English season. It might be a month or it might be three months before the goods so ordered would reach their destination. The local shop-

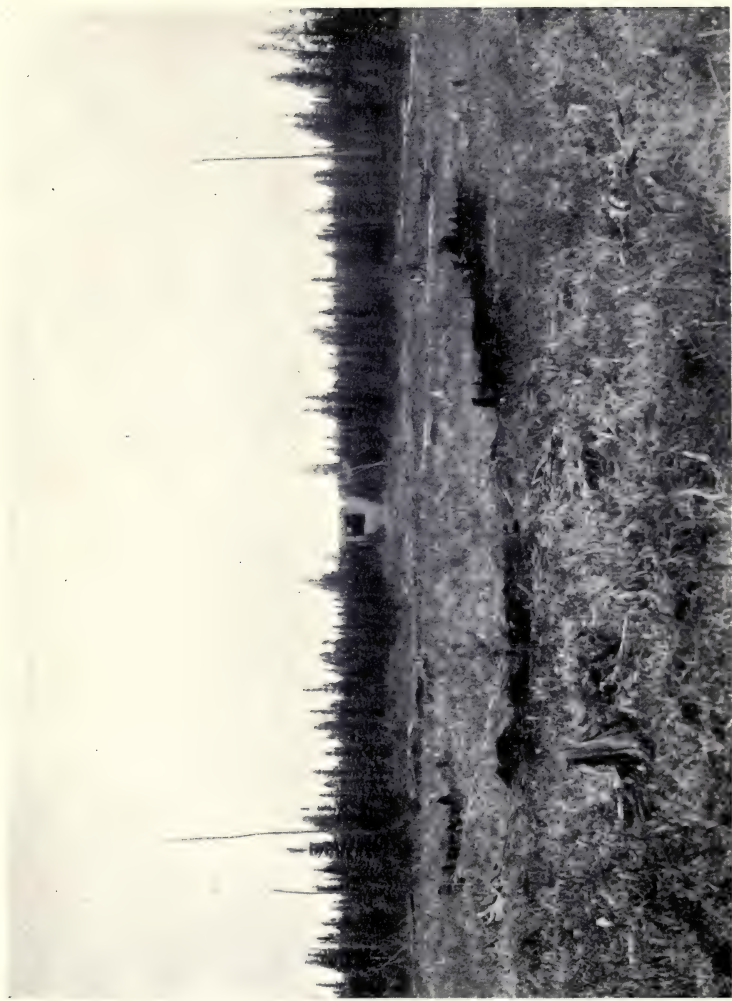
keeper is fully aware of this fact, and so is able to assume the position of a dictator. When a rival appears upon the scene there is no competition between the two. The twain promptly meet, and over a bottle of illicit whisky complete a mutual arrangement to maintain prices for the various commodities.

When I struck the booming town of Fort George in its earliest days, I found 320 energetic souls pushing ahead 320 miles away from the railway as if the latter were only 320 feet distant. Everything was at famine prices, but I had scarcely jumped out of the canoe when a citizen, pausing in his work, looked up and asked if I would give him a hand. He offered 25s. a day, but I declined. Without the slightest hesitation he sprung another 5s., and could give me three weeks' work right off! Wages equalling £10 10s. a week for the most unskilled labour was certainly enticing, and he was dumbfounded when I shook my head negatively, until I explained that I was on different business bent. He laboured under the impression that I was looking for work. Here floorboard-bashing, comprising not only the nailing down of flooring, but also the erection of side-walls, roofs, and internal fittings of a timber frame building was the prime occupation, followed hard by others of a most diversified character. The population for the most part was recruited from ranks of sour-doughs, who had tasted the sweets and acids of the famous gold rush to the Klondyke; Skaguay, Dawson City, and White Horse were mentioned quite as frequently as Fort George.

The ground-floor tenants of Fort George had made history. About 155 miles of waterway and 163 miles of the Cariboo road cut them off from the nearest railway-station—Ashcroft on the Canadian Pacific. When the first rush started, the stampedeers walked, drove, or rode astride a pack-horse over the stretch of paved highway,

and then came up the river as best they could under Indian guidance in canoes, with the Red Men netting 15s. a day or more for their trouble. The population of Fort George concluded that they were being held up too tightly by the Indians, so, without any tackle incidental to the task, they set to work to build a shallow-draught steamboat, launched the hull, installed the requisite machinery, and soon regarded with great satisfaction the result of their handiwork. That solved one part of the transportation problem. Then came another. The traffic along the Cariboo highroad was by team-waggon, pack-horses, and by archaic stage-coach, reminiscent of the fifties of last century between San Francisco and Salt Lake City. This vehicle demanded two days to travel between Soda Creek and Ashcroft. As Fort George prospered and boomed larger and larger in the public eyes, the supersession of horse-traction was demanded. The agitation was met. Motor-cars were introduced; even then the travelling citizens were not satisfied until these were speeded up so as to reel off the 163 miles in about eight or ten hours. It was worth risking the safety of the neck to save a day in travelling between Fort George and Vancouver, the nearest city.

Life in a frontier town is what the inhabitants make it. In the early days the community is a large family; everyone knows everybody else, and one and all pull together to mould the town and to evolve amusements to while away the hours which must be passed in enforced idleness. Practical joking is very rife, although at times it threatens to terminate tragically. One season the Fort Georgeites were marooned. All the boats had come to grief by fouling the rocky teeth in the bed of the Fraser River. Provisions ran short, and the people became anxious about the future. Whether the steamers had been repaired and were coming up the river or not



A FRONTIER TOWN IN THE MAKING : EDSON, AS THE AUTHOR SAW IT IN JULY, 1910.
The view from the station site was a dismal tract of thick brush and muskeg, with the solitary sign of habitation—the black felt-covered Chinaman's hotel—to be seen in the picture.



EDSON, THREE MONTHS LATER, SHOWING BUSH CLEARED AND MAIN STREET WITH TIMBER FRAME BUILDINGS.



no one knew. The town had no telegraphic communication with the outside world by which to glean any such tidings. Every evening crowds made their way to the point where the steamers hitched up alongside the bank, and peered anxiously down the waterway, while rumours fell as quickly as leaves in autumn.

The whole community was strung to a high pitch of apprehension. It could not hold out much longer. One evening there came echoing up the waters of the river the long-drawn-out hoot of a siren. It was the steamer! Everyone ceased work and scampered down to the waterside. The hoot was heard again, and then came a long, long silence. The excited people waited and waited, but the expected steamer did not heave in sight. While one and all were speculating whether the steamboat had come to grief in its last two or three miles of water journey, there was another hoot, and a dugout crept round the bend of the river, with a Siwash poling desperately, and one of the townsfolk standing up blowing a horn for dear life! He had conceived the idea of startling his fellow-citizens into excited frenzy. As he crept towards the town he was assailed with a volley of threats and abuse, but he wisely hugged the opposite bank, and did not land until the temper of the Fort Georgeites had cooled down sufficiently for them to realize that they had been hoodwinked.

Fort George gained fleeting fame as a goldfield. It happened in this wise:

When the early-risers came down Main Street one morning they rubbed their eyes in amazement. There, on the vacant lot beside the baker's shop, was one of the most respected citizens, sedulously washing with a gold-pan. They thought he had gone crazy, but when they went up to him he mutely showed his pan, and the little specks of colour mingled with the muddy silt. They

examined it closely. Gee ! It was gold, and the panner pointed significantly to the ground. In the twinkling of an eye all Fort George had gone gold mad. Vessels of all descriptions were rummaged up to serve as pans, and, with cans and jugs of water, the populace fought in order to get on the small vacant patch. In less than half an hour it was overrun with a mob, digging, shovelling, and panning, as if their existence were at stake. The baker came out of his shack, and in broken German, for he was a stolid Teuton, wanted to know what the "Teffel they vare doin' mit his home," for the excited gold-seekers were undermining his dwelling, and he feared that every minute would bring about its collapse. But his frenzied dancing and wringing of hands were of no avail. The gold-fever had broken out with its characteristic virulence, and the gold-seekers did not care if they tore the baker's shop to pieces so long as they succeeded in their quest.

There were two men who seemed blind to the golden chance. They lounged around extending advice. The excitement culminated when one of the citizens bravely produced his miner's licence, and gravely announced to one and all that he claimed the whole lot in accordance with the terms of law ! As he was the only man present possessing a licence, he was perfectly right in his action. After staking his claim he announced that he was off to Vancouver to do a deal with it. The twain who had been so liberal with suggestions gave vent to an unbridled shriek of delight, and then hurried away to their shack, where the rafters rang with their loud guffaws. Suddenly one of the gold-seekers stopped panning, returned to his senses, and blurted out his opinion that the lot had been salted, and that they had been fooled ! Everyone recalled then that the twain who had been so ready with advice had been to the Klondyke and had small bags of dust. They surmised, as was, indeed, the case, that

they had mixed their dust with the sand, and that the man first seen panning was in the joke. The bubble was pricked ; one and all departed sadly from the scene. Thus the Fort George gold-rush petered out, but the three men who had fathered the enterprise were prostrated with mirth the whole of that day at the success of their scheme to liven things up.

Once a week the citizens had a night off. In other words they participated in revelry of the wildest description. It started off soon after dusk. The members gathered together, and Terpsichore ran riot in the street. When they tired of doing the light fantastic they bawled out the latest comic songs at the tops of their voices to the accompaniment of the wildest musical instruments, and the result was a good imitation of an Indian pot-latch or tribal feast. If any member of the community had given popular offence during the previous week, he was repaid on this occasion, all the town turning out in force against him and obtaining reprisals. I recall one incident while I was there. A certain land speculator had called down the wrath of the small population who did not regard his methods with favour. He had dragged the fair name of rising Fort George through the mud, so they said, and confidently believed. So one night everyone decided to take revenge *en masse*. The town was paraded ; every notice and advertisement of the offensive speculator was destroyed. As the streets were unlighted and practically the whole town was wrapped in darkness, the attack was successful. In the morning the offending property presented a sorry sight, a dismal scene of wreckage, extending to over £100 in value. The aggrieved speculator promptly offered a reward of £20 for the apprehension of the ringleaders, but he is still searching for them.

It is impossible to curb these wild spirits. The pioneer has a strange temperament, and is offended by the

slightest deviation from the "square deal." The community working hand-in-hand has its own code of honour, and by pulling together there is no need for the majesty of law and order in the form of police. Crime is unknown or if it should break out, is suppressed instantly by fellow-citizens, the offender being compelled to seek safety in flight. The majority of these frontier towns are within what is known as the "Dry District"—that is to say, alcoholic liquors are forbidden to be sold and drunk by the Prohibition Law. Yet there are many knaves who stoop to any subterfuge to smuggle in liquor and to dispose of it surreptitiously. If the genuine article cannot be obtained, then they do not hesitate to brew hideous concoctions from fruit-juices and nicotine, which is colloquially known as "raw-cut," while the establishment at which it is made and sold is the "blind pig." In Western Canada the North-West Mounted Police have their own ways and means of dealing with this despicable individual, and they do not restrain their hands when they catch a "blind pig" in full swing. The proprietor is fortunate if he gets off with a fine of £10, a warning to "get out," and the pounding of his stock-in-trade to fragments. He generally follows the advice to make himself scarce, because if he remains behind he is certain to be a marked man, and always to be under suspicion. A second offence may mean exile or imprisonment for a long term, and he does not consider the illicit traffic to be worth this risk.

In the town which I remember drunkenness was very rife at times. The well-ordered members of the community stood aghast at this trend of events. A meeting was held, and the outcome of the conclave was the issue of a general warning that if the persons or person responsible for this deplorable condition of affairs were caught, exemplary and summary punishment would

follow. But the "blind pig," secure in his concealment, laughed at the dire threats of vengeance, until one night he was rounded up. The citizens took the law into their own hands, and the spokesman of the town looked grim and ominous. The "blind pig" was dragged out in an unceremonious manner, amid cries of "Pitch him into the water." He squeaked and shrieked terribly at the prospect of modified lynch-law being practised upon him. The internal arrangements of his shack were tumbled out into a heap in the roadway, and four cases of whisky were brought to light, together with a large quantity of "raw-cut" in various stages of manufacture. The whole lot was destroyed. Over £50 worth of liquor mingled with the dust, and the proprietor struggled and kicked as he saw his stock-in-trade vanishing so unceremoniously. The crowd stuck to their man all night, and the next morning he was hustled out of the town amid general execration and howls of what he would get if caught there again. He was only one offender, but the treatment meted out to this illegal tradesman sufficed to bring about the demise of the remaining "blind pigs" from fright.

In the rising town, however, there is practically an opening for every class of human activity, and if success cannot be struck in one vein there is always the chance to fall back upon another career. The land around the centre becomes opened up, giving scope for the agriculturist; the demand for timber brings about the establishment of timber-mills; machinery of all descriptions is soon in urgent request; and when at last the railway creeps in golden opportunities are presented to the man with a little capital—he has a virgin and uncompetitive field in which to invest his savings.

I have had many glimpses of the frontier town, and as a vortex in which to make money it eclipses completely

the howling city boasting a history of centuries. The population of the whole place may not number more than 100 persons all told, yet one and all are as busy as bees from dawn to dusk putting the place shipshape in readiness for the arrival of the railway or steamboats. There are no drones in such a spot ; the wheels of progress must not be braked. Labour is at a premium, and, accordingly, one has to exercise brawn and muscle in some job or other every day without ceasing. If the work-shy attempted to thrive in such a community, he would starve. Provisions generally soar to high prices, as a weary trek over 200 or 300 miles of rough trail on the backs of pack-horses or in small canoes is costly, and often enchances the value of an article to four or five times its intrinsic value. Difficulties of transportation are responsible for sending bread to 1s. a pound loaf, butter to 4s. a pound, eggs to 6d. or 1s. 6d. apiece, tea, coffee, and other necessities of life to equally exorbitant figures. The poor man cannot live in a frontier town, and, in fact, he is quite an unknown genus, because there is no reason why a man should be poor within its limits.

Though provisions soar almost to famine prices, wages are commensurately high. Unskilled labour can command from 20s. upwards per day. I have seen as much as 50s. per day offered to an English carpenter, and refused. The jack-of-all-trades is in his element, and probably occupies the only notch in this world that is to be found for him. The artist of craft is not required. Everything is in the rough ; the æsthetic tracery comes later when the town has shaken down to its position in the world's affairs. A man must be prepared to do anything, and the nature of his task may be varied as many as six or eight times during the single day.

In the early stages, as may be naturally supposed, building is the absorbing occupation, because new arrivals

must be housed, and shops must be opened to meet the thousand and one requirements of the townsfolk. The buildings, however, are rough timber-frame structures, where fine work is not desired, and, indeed, is wasted energy and ability. The logs are hewn up roughly down at the saw-mill, and as they arrive are rudely fixed to the joist supports in the unplanned state. Work of this character does not demand an experienced carpenter. Anyone can do it, and can make from 15s. to 30s. per day at the job, according to the state of the labour-market, in which the demand generally exceeds the supply.

What becomes of these hardy pioneers, who risk life and limb and brave hardships untold in stirring the melting-pot of civilization and moulding the fabric to form new cities? The end is in harmony with their life; is a fitting conclusion to an existence devoted to grappling with the forbidding wilderness. When at last their work is done they find a quiet resting-place beneath a sheltering tree, under the guardianship of a crude cross, and with a rude picket fence railing off their last 6 feet of Canadian freehold.

CHAPTER XIII

PROSPECTING FOR MINERALS

SOONER or later the new arrival is certain to fall a victim to the prospecting fever. It strikes down one and all without distinction, and there are very few temperaments which can resist the unfathomable fascination of scratching the mountain slopes, sifting the alluvium left by the receding river, or washing the black sand thrown down in the bed of the mountain stream. One can understand somewhat the young man full of life and vigour embarking upon the quest, for the spice of adventure which it affords, but that the older, gnarled, and knotted members of the community should fall ready victims to the craze is beyond comprehension. In this case years do not bring wisdom ; the possibility of becoming rich in the twinkling of an eye cannot be smothered ; gold attracts the young and the old as positively as the magnet attracts the iron filings.

The requirements for prospecting are few. Indeed, the less bulk to which necessities can be reduced the better, because a cumbersome equipment only hampers progress. A knowledge of geology is essential, but this is generally acquired while knocking about the mountains in a general manner, it can be gathered easily by a display of normal intelligence when accompanying well-equipped mining expeditions, and is far more serviceable than digested textbooks. A small pick, a pan for washing, a good jack-knife, and one or two other light tools will meet

every need. One must not overlook the commissariat, for the fastnesses in which Nature locks her treasures are not very supporting to mankind. By the aid of the rifle, bear, deer, and other animals of the forest may be brought down to afford juicy steaks ; fool-hens, grouse, and partridges may be clubbed and shot in the bush, while salmon and other tasty fish may be hooked or trapped in the streams.

The life is maddening : it quenches all thoughts of father, mother, sister, brother, or friend ; the general results are so disappointing ; one becomes suspicious that even one's shadow may betray the whereabouts of a trace of colour that has been found. The senses lose their appointed movement and are drummed into activity. One can tell the professional prospector at a glance. He is uncouth to an extreme degree, though his hospitality cannot be denied. He is heavy-eyed, morose, and listless. He knows nothing of the outside world and its movements—and cares less. His one thought, one absorbing topic of discussion, and one object in life is the discovery of mineral. His company, when you meet him in the frontier town, is depressing. He answers in monosyllables unless you broach his favourite subject, and then he eyes you with a furtive suspicion, fearing that you are bent upon worming out the secret of his heart. Now and again there is a reaction ; Nature kicks at the abuse of the human engine, and the prospector lets himself go. He indulges to excess, and haunts the saloon or pool-room for the whole twenty-four hours, until at last his bodily powers succumb to the unusual treatment, and the prospector is forced to his couch to recuperate.

Yet meet that selfsame individual in the heart of the wilderness as I have done, and you find him the cheeriest companion alive. He has become so dependent upon his own resources that he fears nothing. He will

give you half of what he has with the utmost generosity ; his bonhomie is astonishing ; and if you have a fit of the blues at your luckless isolated situation he is as cheerful as a sandboy. Then you appreciate the man at his true worth. He braves the elements ; neither rain, snow, tempest, nor flood, provoke the slightest fear. He is ready for any emergency. He knows the trackless forest like an open book ; can read the rocks like print ; laughs when his larder is wellnigh exhausted, and at once sets about easing his situation with fish, fur, or feather. He lives the Indian life, but to-day is superior to the Indian, for the simple reason that his intellect, which is so abnormally dull in the town, is strung to a high pitch when he is in the wilderness, with Nature as his sole companion.

I met one man of this calibre who was one of the finest specimens of manhood which it has ever been my fortune to see. He was as strong as a lion, and had never known what illness was. His clothes were few and scanty. As a matter of fact those he possessed wellnigh defied the artifices of needle and thread to keep together. No matter what the weather was, he discarded a coat and pursued his daily task with his shirt open and his chest exposed to the elements. His feet were encased in semi-steel armour, for nails and leather were about equally divided in quantity. No socks enclosed his feet, and his nether garments were of the flimsiest description. His home was a tent, more or less proof against the attacks of the heavy rains. His bed was a crude affair fashioned of poplar logs set about 18 inches above the damp ground, while the carpet was weeds and grass. He had a short length of candle stuck in an empty tin inverted and with a hole knocked through its bottom to grip the waxen dip. It was used but seldom, for when he offered it to me one night the wick defied my attempts to light it because it had rotted !

His fare was as rude as his life. Pork and beans for the most part three times a day, week in and week out, washed down with tea and assisted occasionally by a tin—he had no plate or basin—of viscous, repulsive oatmeal which had grown musty through age. Now and again he went to the trouble of preparing bannock, but that was seldom. Outside his tent was a small patch where he had planted a few lettuces and onions, and these were struggling for existence with stones and weeds as keenly as he himself.

With the first streaks of dawn he was astir and busied himself with his morning meal, which, being of a simple character, occupied but very little time in its preparation. Breakfast discussed, he armed himself with his axe and pick and sallied off into the mountains. Perhaps he did not return for two or three days, living as best he could on what he could bring down with his gun or trap from the creeks. As the shades of evening cast long shadows upon the ground and lit up the snow-capped mountains in fantastic hues he strode homeward as hungry as a hunter. In a few minutes his camp fire was blazing furiously, the eternal pork and beans were sizzling merrily in the pot, and were eaten with more relish than an epicure enjoys the dainties concocted by a world-famous chef in a celebrated hotel or club. When the meal was finished he sprawled on the ground before the fire and carefully examined for traces of mineral the specimens of rock he had brought home with him.

Now and again the daily toil among the rocks was relieved by a hunting expedition. He had built a canoe with which he plodded along the silent rushing waterways. The canoe was truly primitive. The planks were logs of trees which he had felled and pared down, with infinite labour with the axe, to the required thickness. It was a sturdy, business-like-looking craft, but one which the

average person would view with ill-concealed distrust. If he could not overcome a difficulty with his canoe, he set to work fashioning a raft, with which he crossed the widest waterways, discarding it when he reached the opposite bank.

Civilization to him was another world. The frontier on one side was 170 miles away, and on the other between 200 and 300 miles. He received news of what was happening outside his own little world from fellow-toilers who chanced to pass his way, or from Indians. When I first met him he was enjoying a daily paper two months old, and reading it with as much gusto as if the events narrated therein had happened only twenty-four hours previously.

Another prospector and a companion set off on an expedition, and had just returned after an absence of eighteen months when I chanced upon them. During that interval they had not seen another being, red or white, and for a week scarcely two dozen words had passed between them, for they had nothing about which to talk. The world to them was an utter blank for a year and a half. Even when they did come into the outpost they failed to evince the slightest interest in current happenings, were silent concerning their adventures and privations, but were unduly loquacious as to the results of their expedition, and displayed, with the greatest pride, the fruits of their moiling among the rocks.

As a rule, two or three, or may be five or six, kindred spirits co-operate in a methodical search. Such a syndicate does not confine itself to the discovery of one metal—all minerals of commercial value are grist to the prospector's mill. Two or three of the party are certain to be hardened under the stones of experience, and in such company the neophyte can acquire considerable and valuable knowledge. Expenses are shared, and the

profits likewise. This procedure is preferable since, in the event of a large strike being made, and covering more area than one man is at liberty to claim, the whole may be roped in completely by several members working together, and naturally the marketable value of such a holding, if development proves its worth, is increased more appreciably than if only a small corner be secured. By this means, also, forces can be scattered, or one or two can be spared to travel between the isolated community and the outpost of civilization for the purpose of bringing in provisions and other necessities.

Prospecting will afford the participator the maximum of adventure of the most varied description, and this is better shared by six men than borne by one alone. One party we met were bent on a survey of some likely gold-bearing rock in the vicinity of Mount Robson. We were bent on getting to the base of this hoary old monarch, which was no easy task, seeing that the mountain is isolated by muskeg, large cedar groves, and is walled in by heavy rock slides without the sign of a path to guide the explorer. These boys knew a short cut and promised to meet us at a certain point to give us the benefit of their experiences, as they had forced their way into this forbidding country before.

They started off from their camp, which was about fifteen miles east of our tent settlement. When we met them they were in a sorry plight. They had been crawling round the edge of a rocky hump very warily, with their pack-horses carrying all their worldly possessions when something went wrong. The pack-horses slipped on the shale, and the packs, becoming dislodged, went careering gaily down the steep slopes of a deep gulch. The gunny-sacks containing their provisions and other impedimenta came to grief against the sharp pinnacles of rock and were sent flying in all directions. Practically everything was

lost, but when we reached them they did not appear to regard it as more than a huge joke. One of the party was somewhat glum. The gunny-sack had contained his whole supply of tobacco—eleven pounds—and he was inconsolable over the loss of his nicotine, for without his pipe he felt quite lost. His comrades joked endlessly over this episode, because it did not affect their comfort one iota, as they did not smoke. Unfortunately, while we could help them out somewhat with provisions, we could not extend material assistance in connection with the fragrant weed, as we were on short rations ourselves. Our prospecting friend did not look forward very enthusiastically to the prospect of being compelled to be satisfied with *ki-ni-ki-nic*—the Indian makeshift from willow bark is an indifferent substitute for the genuine article.

The discomfort the man afflicted with the gold-fever will tolerate is astonishing. I have seen many sad evidences of misplaced toil and zeal in the form of a decaying shack pitched beside a rippling creek, or a home-made rocker hiding itself in the weeds. Occasionally more grim signs of the toll Fortune exacts from those who attempt to woo her in this wise were revealed in a drooping cross fashioned from two poplar sticks nailed together and enclosed within a tumbling picket fence. These monuments tell tragic stories of many a forlorn hope. In some cases the expedition had come to grief; in others, members of the party had succumbed to illness, or had met with an accident which terminated fatally. Although the survivors had not hesitated to perform the last mournful rites, they had left the spot as if it were accursed.

Going down the upper stretches of the Fraser River, the Indian guides one day drew attention to the rotting walls of what some time past had been a shack. It was

set back from the river, and was scarcely discernible among the trees. The roof had gone and the scrub was thriving luxuriantly in what had once been the combined living and sleeping apartment. That crumbling ruin recalled one of those stories associated with the search for gold which make the blood run cold.

The Fraser River always has been a great magnet of attraction among prospectors. Traces of gold in more or less paying quantities can be washed out from the dirt forming its bed. These specks of yellow have been brought down from the mountain slopes in the far interior, and the more adventurous prospectors ventured into the closed wilderness to trace the source of this supply, dogging the glittering particles as relentlessly as the bloodhound clings to his trail. They were confident that somewhere among the mountains a huge treasure-chest of gold was hoarded by Nature to enable such quantities to be disintegrated and carried 500 or 600 miles down the waterway.

Four prospectors set off on one of these expeditions. There was no trail to the country they sought; the only available highway was the treacherous river. Indian dugouts were acquired and loaded with the prospectors' stock-in-trade and provisions. It was by no means an attractive journey, as they had to drive their flimsy craft some 400 miles over one of the worst stretches of this "bad river," where the current is so strong that one cannot paddle against it. Progress can only be made by hugging the bank and poling the canoe upstream as if it were a punt. By toiling hard for ten hours on end an advance of possibly twenty miles a day may be made.

That expedition was dogged with ill-luck. While pushing along hard one day, the pole in one of the prospector's hands snapped in half. He lost his balance, and with a despairing shriek tumbled into the water, where

he was picked up by the wicked current and whisked downstream. Before his comrades realized what had happened he was some distance away, battling frantically for his life, but ere they could extend him any assistance he sank from sight! Two of the others were so unnerved at this stroke of bad luck that they favoured the abandonment of the project, but the third decided to go ahead. At last, after much debate, the journey was resumed.

In due course the party reached a little creek which danced down from the summits of the mountains above, and as this appeared a likely spot for investigations the canoes were pulled in, a clearing was made in the bush and in a short while a shack was run up. With a roof over their heads the party settled down to work in grim earnest. The presence of black sand, which is almost a positive sign that gold exists, in the creek, spurred them to prodigious efforts with the pan. Small quantities of the mineral were the rewards for this industry and the prospectors diligently pushed their way up the banks of the creek towards its source, certain that they were on the right trail.

Precisely what happened, or how much success attended their efforts, never will be known. Certain it is, however, that they obtained some quantity of gold, which they hoarded up in their gunny-sacks in the true prospector's fashion. One night a member of the trio grew covetous. He murdered his two comrades, buried them outside the shack in the dense bush, and then, grabbing their small wealth of metal, fled from the scene. It was some time before the murder leaked out, and by that time the criminal had made good his escape, whence no one knew. Still, the forces of law and order in this Far West have been called upon to elucidate far more baffling mysteries than this, and with far more slender clues to aid them. A

description of the missing man was secured after the murdered comrades had been exhumed and identified ; the hue and cry were raised throughout the country. No doubt was entertained but that sooner or later the criminal would be run to earth, although he had secured a start of several weeks. It is a strange circumstance that, although the Great West spreads over many thousands of square miles of dense forest which hug their secrets tightly, fewer crimes perpetrated in their fastnesses go unpunished than in a large city of a million or more people.

The sequel was as dramatic as the crime. Although Justice was indefatigable, the capture of the fugitive appeared to be denied. As a matter of fact, he was enjoying himself hugely with his illgotten gains. He sauntered into a town and created a good impression, as he appeared to be a hustler. He was out driving a buggy one day when his horse took fright and bolted. The man was caught unawares, and was pitched out of the vehicle, to be thrown head-first against a tree stump. His skull cracked under the impact, and he was hurried off to hospital suffering from concussion of the brain. The doctors held out no hopes. He never recovered consciousness, but one night he commenced rambling in delirium. The nurse endeavoured to pacify him, but to her surprise he was relating a grim story in too vivid detail. Suspecting that something was amiss, the nurse summoned the house-surgeon, who at once communicated with the police. An officer arrived, and after listening to a few words of the unconscious man's rambling he recognized the fugitive for whom search was being made high and low. The police clung to the bedside, and from the incoherent statements uttered in delirium, they were able to reconstruct the tragedy more or less, for the details were uncannily precise. Although the man missed

the hangman's noose, Fate broke his head, and so Justice was satisfied. A far more convincing narrative of the terrible tragedy of that night in the lonely shack upon the banks of the Fraser River was obtained than if the murderer had made a cold written confession just before his execution.

The fate that overtook two other prospectors was almost as grim. They ventured out on foot in the spring, with their provision packs, pan, and picks strapped to their shoulders, and penetrated to the heart of the interior. When the time came to beat a retreat before the winter season, they found that their constitution and physical endurance had been undermined from roughing it in the wilds for several weeks. To make matters worse their provisions ran out, and the bush yielded little sustenance in game. On top of this calamity they lost their way. The Indian can pick up the trails in the silent depths of the forest as easily as the town dweller can follow a city's streets from the names inscribed upon the walls at the corners, but to these two prospectors the blazings were worse than a maze. The river was their objective, since once they struck the waterway they could fashion a raft and in this manner drift into civilization's boundaries. But they could not pick up the river, though they were positive that it lay before them. They wandered to and fro, taking first this trail and then that, but to no avail. Every one was a blind alley, and more often than not after trudging along despairingly for hour after hour, faint and weary, they came back to the point from which they had started in the morning. This is one of the sorry tricks played by the forest, and it demands a strong will to stand up against such mocking rebuffs.

The winter fell upon them : the white mantle slipped down the mountain slopes, but those two prospectors did not return. Their friends grew somewhat anxious,

knowing full well that they were not equipped in such a manner as to withstand the rigours of winter. Then news of their discovery came to hand. Two or three Indians out trapping and hunting for furs stumbled over two huddled heaps lying side by side in the trail. At first they took them for merely snow-covered pieces of dead-fall and would have passed on but for their dogs. The huskies came to a dead stop and commenced to bark frantically, at the same time scraping furiously at the hillock. The Indians cleared away the snow, and there, stiff and cold, were the bodies of the two prospectors within 20 feet of the river they had sought so diligently ! The two bodies were brought into the nearest settlement, where there happened to be a doctor. A post-mortem examination revealed the fact only too plainly that the men had sunk down from sheer exhaustion and had died from hunger, for apparently they had not eaten a bite for over a week.

Prospectors as a rule confine their scouring energies to the summer months, because they cannot carry in sufficient provisions to tide them over the winter. As the snow-line gradually descends the mountains they hurry into the settlements. When I reached the rising towns of Telkwa and Hazelton in New British Columbia, prospectors were coming in by the score from the Babine, the Cascades, and the Skeena Mountains. Each had his gunny-sack crammed with ore slung over his shoulder, or possibly upon a pack-horse. All bore visible signs of their toil and the hard knocks they had received in the gorges and gulleys of the ranges on every hand. Their clothes and footwear were badly knocked about, their hair was tangled and matted, their faces were covered with ragged beards, their eyes were bleary and bloodshot from exposure to the elements : taken altogether, they presented a strange, unkempt spectacle. The hairdresser

was kept busy for hour after hour with his clippers and razors, and the store drove a lively trade fitting out the boys with garments in which they could get back to the towns for the winter, for most of these worthies came from Vancouver, Seattle, Chicago, and other American cities.

Though the task is exacting, the prizes to be won are not to be despised. The northern mountains of British Columbia are packed with gold, silver, galena, coal, and other valuable minerals, but their discovery is by no means easy. Hudson Bay Mountain, a sentinel of the Cascade Range, is a mass of metal from base to crest, and has been the scene of tremendous prospecting activity during the past few years. Indeed, it would be difficult to stake a new claim upon its slopes to-day, for the discoveries of various prospectors jostle one another on all sides, and even the edges of the mighty glacier are not free from the prospector's determination to accrue wealth.

The Babine Range is being searched from end to end just as diligently, and here again many remarkable finds have been made, metals of all descriptions being found in abundance. One prospector had made a strike, which, although it appeared highly promising at first sight, was too rich in mineral to be of commercial value. It was copper, and some of the assays ran up to 90 per cent. ! The mineral could not be blasted, and could not be excavated with a pick, because, being so pure, it was quite plastic, and was like putty to handle.

CHAPTER XIV

PROSPECTING FOR MINERALS (*continued*)

THE prospector is the epitome of honesty. When he strikes a town in the mineral area generally he is empty in pocket or else his purse is slender in the extreme. Yet, once his bona fides are established, he is extended almost unlimited credit, the tradesmen knowing full well that when metal is struck their accounts will be settled. Many strange worthies of this character may be met in British Columbia. There was Archie McMurdo, for instance. A Scotsman, he was canny to an extreme degree, although he "was broke to the wide" when he came into the town. He had devoted the greater part of his life to scratching the rocks on the mountain slopes, and success had attended his perseverance. He staked two rich gold claims. Satisfied with this measure of success, he returned to the adjacent township to pass his time in indolence and ease until financiers came his way and took over his properties, as he knew would be the case sooner or later. He would not do a stroke of work; he dreamed of the wealth in the air which was to materialize. Although he clung to his claims for ten years without a sign of development materializing in the meantime he never grew down-hearted.

One day some mining experts, acting on behalf of financiers who had heard of Archie's finds—he took good care that attractive stories as to the value of his prospects should be sedulously circulated—appeared on

the scene. They were desirous of investigating the McMurdo claims. Archie, as usual, was run to earth in the hotel where he had been living gaily and had not paid a cent for years. Everything he had was written upon the slate, or rather in a good-sized account book. The mining experts expressed their intentions, and requested Archie to accompany them.

"I'll see you to blazes first!" replied Archie.

"But, man, we cannot do anything unless we see what you've got," replied the experts.

"I dinna care," was Archie's retort. "Unless you plank down a hundred dollars for my expenses, and deposit spot cash in the bank to be handed over to me when you come back, I'm not going. I've spent too many years among those darned mountains to go there again on chance."

Argument was useless. The money he demanded had to be deposited, and then he sallied off to lead the experts to one of his claims. It was far up on the mountain-side, and when they reached the bottom of the trail he told the experts to go ahead. He would wait for them.

"But you must come and show us the place," urged the engineers.

"No, sonnies, not me! I'm not going to pull up that slope any more. There's the trail which I cut myself. It leads straight to the spot. You can't miss it, so I'll sit down here and wait until you come back." Saying which, he planked down on a dead-fall and puffed away at his pipe as if the engineers were miles away.

Having come so far, the latter did not care to return without having achieved their object. They could not shake Archie's obstinacy; so they went alone. He waited patiently for hours, and upon their return inquired if they were satisfied. They responded in the affirmative, and Archie accompanied the party back to the town

highly elated. He went straight to the bank, and drew out the £4,000 that had been deposited for his property. He sailed off to the hotel, called for his account which had been running for ten years, and settled it up without a murmur. Then he strode up the street, and entered the store where he had obtained unlimited credit for an equal length of time. It was no easy matter to tot up his debts, for they occupied a few score pages. But at last the bill was presented, and, without scanning a sheet, Archie paid the amount. He then returned to the hotel, completely satisfied with the world at large, and called for drinks.

His claim was opened up, and its success prompted another group to approach him for his second claim. The party were met just as nonchalantly. Archie explained its position, related how it could be reached, and told the engineers to start off right away. When they suggested that he should come along too, he laughed them to scorn, and told them point-blank that if they couldn't find their way with the instructions he had given them, they had better go back home and leave the claim alone.

Unfortunately, the rigours of exposure among the mountains, combined with excesses in the town, had undermined McMurdo's constitution. He was stricken down with illness, and was hurried off to the hospital. On the last day of the year the second claim matured, and £10,000 were handed to the rugged prospector. But he never saw a penny of it. On the following day he succumbed, but he died with the satisfaction that he did not owe a farthing to anyone.

The vast tract of wilderness north of the Fraser River stretching away to the Arctic circle, but especially in the watershed of the Peace River, is associated with much yellow wealth. It has been difficult of access hitherto, but penetration is becoming easier every day now, owing to the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

The Pine River has been the scene of mining bustle in the past, for the river bed is rich in colour. The gold-bearing area extends over 100 miles, and miners using primitive rockers have wrested as much as £3 to £4 worth of gold per day from the silt. A few miners are to be encountered along its banks to-day, but its attraction appears to have disappeared. The gold is worth panning, the metal being in heavy flakes like fish scales, while in some places quite large nuggets have been found. The working season extends from March to October, and certain success attends the industrious, despite the remote situation of the territory. As the Peace River country is being settled so rapidly, however, it is probable that a large number of prospectors and miners will force their way into the country. It should be a promising undertaking for some energetic prospectors to trace the point from which this gold is brought down, and undoubtedly many of the creeks and rivulets feeding the Pine River, and which rise high up on the mountain crags, would repay exploration. At the present moment the installation of a dredger should be remunerative upon this 100 miles of the river. I have been told that such could be transported and launched upon the waterway for between £30,000 and £40,000, and that men competent with such means of extracting the gold, could make from £5 to £8 apiece per day in wages, doing as much work in that time as from 800 to 1,000 men with pans and rockers.

The fascination of prospecting is its glorious uncertainty. One never knows when a strike is going to be made. There was one coal prospector who had made a study of the eastern Rocky Mountains coal bed. One day he suddenly announced his intention of setting off towards Jasper House on the Athabasca River, to continue his investigations. It seemed a hopeless quest,

because geological knowledge was dead against him. The prospector, however, had elaborated his own ideas, and he started out. He commenced operations on the southern side of the river, and he had not gone far when he struck a rich seam of coal. He probed the country through and through, and found coal of excellent quality on every hand. As a matter of fact, he struck one of the finest coal deposits in the West, and development more than confirmed his prospects. I was taken over the preliminary works, and the whole mountains seemed to be alive with the black mineral fuel. Before the prospector had completed his work, thirteen square miles of land were pegged off for operations, and geological knowledge was scattered ruthlessly to the four winds. To-day the Jasper Park Collieries give every indication of becoming one of the largest and most valuable coal properties in the West.

Yet this discovery was but a repetition of experience in connection with Cobalt. Geologists laughed at the mere idea that silver was likely to be found in this district. Why, the very character of the rocks was all against such a probability! How far geological science was correct one can judge to-day, because two-thirds of the world's supply of silver comes from the very country which was ridiculed as being unable to yield an ounce of silver.

It is stated that the Cobalt mineral wealth was discovered by accident. Legend relates that a deer was being hunted through the bush. In its mad flight it passed near a blacksmith's shack. The son of Tubal Cain was at work as the deer passed, and he flung his heavy hammer at the frightened animal. The missile missed the target, but struck a large dull-looking stone, breaking off a fragment. The blacksmith went to pick up his hammer, but in stooping, noticed that the stone gave a brilliant lustre, where it had been chipped. The

boulder was picked up, and further investigation revealed the fact that it was a mass of silver !

It is a pretty story, but as a matter of fact the discovery of the metal was stripped of such romance. The wealth was found during prosaic prospecting by an industrious individual who cared little for scientific opinion. When he struck the silver veins, a frantic rush ensued, and in a few weeks, what was a picturesque sylvan spot in the beautiful Temagami country, was stripped of its bush, and was dotted with tents and hastily-built shacks.

Fortunes have been won and lost at Cobalt by the score. One man was anxious to get into the country, but he had not the wherewithal to pay his railway fare farther than North Bay. He did not cherish the prospect of walking 200 miles, so he "beat" the train into the country. He landed in Cobalt without a penny in his pocket. When he returned south, he travelled not on the roof exposed to the elements, but in the luxury of the Pullman drawing-room car. Another prospector came into Cobalt with £60 in his pocket, and having had wide prospecting experience among the mountains of British Columbia, he soon turned his original capital into between £40,000 and £60,000. Some of the big finds in Cobalt have been made quite by accident. Outside one shack a plank-seat was supported on two large boulders. One day an occupant of the seat was idly sharpening his jack-knife upon one of the masses of rock. Presently he became intensely interested in the stone, and submitted it to a closer inspection. The ungainly mass of rock supporting the seat turned out to be a silver nugget weighing over 4,000 ounces and worth about £400.

The prospecting and gold-camp of to-day is vastly dissimilar from the hotbeds of debauchery and crime pictured by Bret Harte. As a rule they are fairly well ordered communities, thanks to the action of the forces

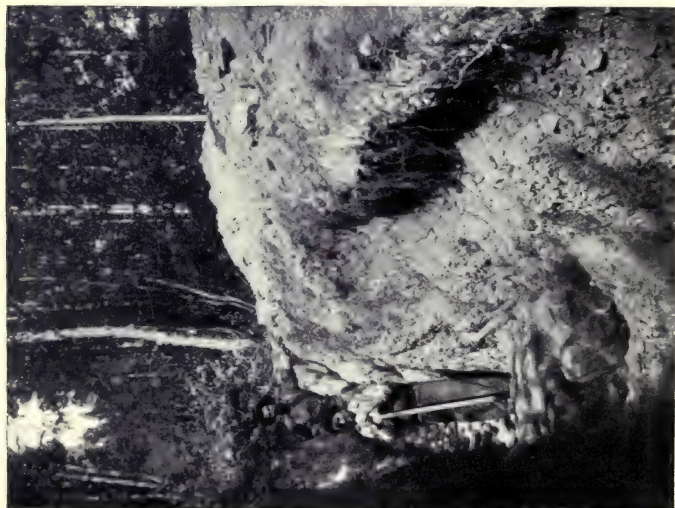
of law and order. Such tricks as jumping claims are very seldom practised ; in fact, they are practically unknown. The miners are guarded by the Government, through their licences, which cost but a small sum per year, and these provide complete protection, as well as affording other benefits.

The wonderful discoveries of the Klondyke precipitated possibly the greatest rush in Canadian history. Though the easiest route was by water from western coasts port to Skaguay, many were lured into the effort to toil 4,000 miles across country from Edmonton. The fever broke out in this town with tremendous virulence, and some of the strangest vehicles it is possible to conceive were devised to carry the gold-seekers through the most terrible country to be found on the continent. Some set off with wheelbarrows, undeterred by the prospect of having to trundle the same for such a tremendous distance, while large numbers set off on sleighs. It was a disastrous expedition. The majority turned back, abandoning their vehicles, provisions, and outfits to the mercies of the elements. The trail was blazed for a considerable distance with these discarded equipments. Some pushed on, desperately, determined to get to their destination at all hazards. One prospector was found trundling a wheelbarrow through the mountains some distance north of the Skeena River two years after he had set out from Edmonton ! He had lost his way, his chum had died on the trail, and the survivor knew nothing about time, days, or months. When found, he was pushing forward with more or less energy. When he learned that he had been on the trail for nearly two years, he gasped, but that did not deter him. Privation and loneliness had almost deprived him of speech, and had dulled his intellect to the point that he could not comprehend anything beyond the fact that he was bound

for the Klondyke and its gold. The boys who found him, only persuaded him to return to civilization with them by impressing upon him the fact that the gold strike had "petered out," and that he was on a lost journey. Two miles a day had been his average advance, and how he had contrived to cross the rivers single-handed was a mystery which his rescuers could not fathom.

The discovery at the Klondyke provoked a situation excelling in lawlessness any that were incidental to the Californian gold-rush. One noted desperado ruled the whole town of Skaguay. His avariciousness and crime knew no limits. Before he was shot down, it is stated that over fifty prospectors and gold-seekers had been sent to their doom after being robbed of their hard-earned gold. His usual practice was to waylay them on the trail, and to pitch their bodies into a canyon or gorge, where they were safe from discovery. When challenged for having caused a man's death, Soapy Smith, which was the unpretentious name of this individual, always replied that he shot in self-defence. In some instances such was the case, and the desperado himself had many narrow escapes. One day he waylaid a returning prospector on the mountain pass. The gold-seeker, however, was not to be despoiled so easily. He met the hold-up with a drive from his rifle, and the bullet went through Smith's hat. A second shot was impossible, because Soapy Smith pierced the prospector through the heart. On another occasion he held up a young English fellow who was returning to Skaguay. The boy did not take any notice of the challenge, and Smith fired, knocking him over. The young prospector whipped out his revolver, and blazed away at his adversary, twice wounding him slightly, before the desperado settled the boy with his third shot.

Smith was a great anxiety to the Canadian authorities.



A PROSPECTOR'S STRIKE ON A BIG VEIN OF SILVER



R. C. W. Lett.

A HEAVY PORTAGE ROUND WHITE DEER RAPIDS

The Mounted Police were stationed on the Boundary at the summit of the Pass, and received strict injunctions to arrest Smith if he attempted any of his tricks on Canadian territory. In Alaska, which was United States territory, he could do as he liked or what was permitted—the desperado represented law and order of his own peculiar formation—but at times he enraged the honest citizens to such a pitch that he had to make himself scarce for a while. On such occasions he hurried towards the Boundary, hoping to snatch temporary asylum in Canada, until things quietened down in Skaguay. But his efforts were fruitless: the Mounted Police always frustrated his plans. Just as he was on the verge of stepping across the border, he was confronted by one of these guardians of the Great West. At last, the latter wearied of watching such a parasite. He was taken quietly aside by one of the police, and told very significantly that “if he were seen on Canadian territory he would receive more asylum than he desired with a bullet. They would not trouble to arrest and try such carrion as him, as it would be waste of time and money.” Smith took the hint, and was never seen to make another attempt to penetrate into Canada. Shortly afterwards he was shot down by the infuriated townsfolk of Skaguay, and the reign of terrorism was ended.

A graphic and intimate impression of the adventurous life of the mineral prospector was conveyed to me one night round the blazing camp fire, by my companion on the trail, Robert C. W. Lett. When he broke away from the lonely calling of game-warden in Algonquin Park, he embarked upon a prospecting expedition. Two experienced companions joined him in this pursuit of fortune, the projected field for their labours being one of the innermost recesses of Ontario, which has since gained fame as the Gowganda country.

The definite intention of this trio was to find silver, if possible, though, of course, they were quite ready and willing to stake out claims of any other commercial minerals, should signs thereof present themselves. They started out from Latchford on the Montreal River, just south of Cobalt, in the early spring of 1907.

A steady 150 miles pull along the Montreal River confronted them at the outset, and it proved a pretty tough undertaking negotiating the fiendish rapids with which the upper reaches of this waterway abound, with two heavily-laden canoes, carrying sufficient foodstuffs and other requisites for three months, prospecting, as they proceeded. The Cobalt boom was at its height at the time, and the fever-stricken prospectors, many of them amateurs, were rambling over the country in all directions. To many of these greenhorns the Montreal River proved a Waterloo. The stream swings along at a terrifying pace, bristles with perils of the worst description, and can only be navigated safely by an old hand. Yet many of the tenderfeet were foolish enough to attempt to master its idiosyncrasies and dangers without any previous boating experience whatever, with the inevitable result—fatalities were numerous.

Lett pushed along in one canoe, and his two companions managed the second boat. This was the order of the day, but when the long, arduous portages had to be made, the three boys joined hands, carting the baggage and boats over the interruption in the water journey. They drove their way for fifty-four miles through swarms of prospectors, feverishly scratching the hillsides, to Elk Lake, which then was being searched energetically. The trio, however, passed on, and once Elk Lake was left behind, they found the number of mineral-searching rivals grow fewer and fewer in number. This was not surprising, as the rock formation was extremely dis-

couraging, and appeared to grow worse, so far as mineral wealth was concerned, the farther they pushed on.

The party reached the foot of Nine-Mile Rapids, so called because the river rushes through a narrow gorge at this point. It was late in the day, and a heavy lift of one mile over a towering hill confronted them. They decided to put off this stiff job till the morrow, so sneaking up in the eddy at the foot of the Rapids, the canoes were run ashore, the dunnage was thrown out, and camp was pitched. While the party were seated round the camp fire in the gloaming, discussing the next morning's task, they heard a peculiar wail above the churning of the waters. It resembled the cry of a cat, but the idea of seeing this animal in such a wild spot was so extraordinary, that they dismissed its possibility from their minds, attributing the wail to the rapids, because one imagines one can hear strange and fantastic sounds in the music of the waters. The howl continued, and grew more nerve-racking. At last, one of the boys, glancing round in the direction whence the sound came, spied through the dusk a large black cat perched on the top of a cedar-tree, on the opposite bank, and apparently calling for help. It was quite impossible to rescue the animal, as the river could not be crossed unless they dropped downstream a mile, and then there would have been very heavy going over rough country to get at the cat's eyrie. Suddenly, to the astonishment of the party the cat gave a spring into the maddened waters, and was lost to sight ! It reappeared just as suddenly downstream, swimming frantically, and as it was swung along in the swirling waters, it grabbed the stub of a tree with a clutch of death, pulled itself from the water, gave a bound, and landed on the same bank, from which it had started. The party thought no more about the incident, concluding that the cat would not reappear, after one such experience.

But to their amazement, in the course of a few minutes, the cry broke out again, more plaintively than ever, and there was the cat on the cedar-tree stump. Once more they saw it give a spring to land in the rapids. This time pussy was taken well downstream, was lost to sight, and the party thought that the last had been seen of it. But just as they were curling up in their sleeping-bags, the wail broke out for the third time. They were too tired to keep awake any longer, and fell into the arms of Morpheus, with the cat's cry beating into their ears above the droning of the rapids. For days after they thought they could hear the cat calling, and wondering how such an animal happened to be so far from the haunts of men, inquired of the fire-warden, whom they met a few days later. Then the mystery was solved. The black cat belonged to a prospector, who had lost his mascot some weeks before.

On this trip the party accomplished an apparently impossible task—they built a cabin with eleven nails. It may seem incredible, but it was an absolute fact, for the simple reason that no more were available. When they struck a blacksmith working at his forge, they gave him one of the nails, which was a pretty big one, and he drew it out thin enough to make three nails. As may be imagined, the nails were driven home with extreme care, and in the right place every time. This particular blacksmith, Tom Sharpe, was a handy man, and one who had been kicked by Fortune pretty badly. He discovered the big Lawson Vein in Cobalt, which is a solid streak of silver fully nine inches wide, and polished flush with the country rock on each side. When Tommy made this find he was so new at the business that he did not know whether he had struck iron or silver, and the luck he struck brought him in only a miserable bagatelle of £140 !

The party traversed country which was sheer wilderness, and which has still to await the coming of the

surveyor with his transit and level. Their luck appeared to be dead out ; so much so, in fact, that after they had crossed the height of land between Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes, they retraced their steps, owing to the unpromising character of the rock, keeping to the Montreal River until they gained Wapoose Creek. Here they called a halt, two resting at the meeting of the waters, while Lett paddled up the creek to make a reconnaissance for a suitable spot in which to camp. After making one-and-a-half miles upstream, Lett was brought to a stop by rapids, and then he decided to wait until his companions came up, as they had promised to follow him. He kicked his heels idly about on the bank for half an hour, and then, growing impatient, drew the bow of the canoe ashore, and with his prospecting pick, decided to pass the time ferreting round. There was a large talus heap in the vicinity, and he started turning this over. He found the rock to be diabase, similar to that found in the Cobalt silver area, and this was very encouraging. He examined the broken mass carefully, and finally lighted on one piece which had evidently broken away from a vein many years before. It proved to be calcite : the scent grew stronger. Indeed, it was the first promising find the party had made during many score miles of search, and this discovery proved that the country might possibly be very rich in valuable mineralized veins. Lett was so elated with his success, that he pitched a chunk of the rock into his canoe, and swung downstream to pick up his companions, to report the result of his find. He found the two boys slaving for dear life preparing a camping-ground, and having a lively time. The mosquitoes had turned out in force to repel the white man's invasion, and they were about the most ferocious members of their race that they had ever struck. Before they could obtain the slightest respite from the vermin's onslaughts, they

had to don buckskin mittens, to plaster their skin with fly "dope," as the salve against bites is picturesquely termed, and to enclose their heads in miniature meat safes. Even then they failed to hold their own against the swarms of formidable insects, but had to abandon their camping-ground, and to withdraw their forces to a flat rock of slate, which projected into the river, and on which they raised their tent, weighting the ropes with heavy stones, instead of securing them to pegs.

The calcite find was discussed very eagerly that night after supper, and under the circumstances it was decided to follow up these indications in the hope of striking a rich vein. The next day they pushed towards the foot of the Wapoose Creek Rapids, and embarked upon a systematic investigation of the rock formation. Again Lett drew a lucky card, for after two or three days' diligent prospecting, he lighted upon a tiny piece of cobalt bloom, which indicates the presence of smalltite, the ore of cobalt. The "strike" was made, and the trio set to work staking their claim.

The three prospectors have received the due reward for their temerity in venturing into an unknown country, and their arduous tracking through mile after mile of exasperating primeval country, for they hold no less than 440 acres, containing ample water power and innumerable indications of a rich deposit of silver, which has been proved in large quantities by the men engaged in performing the assessment work required by law. Lett and his companions not only were among the first to penetrate the Gowganda country, but their exploration work was carried out to such distinct advantage, that their results have become of value to the Government, and the foundations of a second Cobalt have been laid, ready to go ahead directly the railway reaches it, and permits machinery to be brought in.

Thus it will be realized that systematic search brings its fruits in due time. Yet the prospector does not always reap the harvest of his hard toil. There was Vital LeFort for instance. This French-Canadian from the East was among the first to track gold in British Columbia. A rush ensued to "Vital Creek," as the hub of activity was called. Many made money out of that strike, but not so the man responsible for the excitement. He failed to rise to the occasion, being content to sit on his claim. When I met Vital LeFort, he ferried me across the Nechaco River, within sight of the Hudson Bay trading post at Fort Fraser. This was his only source of income, the Government having placed him in charge of the means of crossing the waterway at this point, with the revenue from the traffic as his means of livelihood. Even this calling is in danger of disappearing, because the iron horse is hurrying rapidly through this country, and when it arrives, there will be little traffic to be ferried across the river.

CHAPTER XV

WITH HIS MAJESTY'S MAILS

THE Royal Mail Service, like time and tide, waits for no man, and will brook no interference with its ordained movements. No matter whether the round is along city pavements, across sweltering deserts, through cavernous forests, over frozen snow-bound wastes, or by miasmic swamps, if the fiat has gone forth that letters are to be delivered to, and collected from, the spot beyond, the mail service must be maintained at all hazards. He who enlists in the service, and undertakes to get the bag of correspondence through, must be prepared to face any contingency ; to surmount any obstacle. The postman must complete his round.

It is one of the outstanding features of British colonization or settlement and developing work, that those engaged in pioneering shall not be denied the postal privileges of civilization. The delivery and collection may be erratic from causes over which man has no possible control, but the frontier town accepts the inevitable without a murmur. Directly a little settlement springs up in the remote wilderness the threads of the postal service of the country are rewoven, so as to bring the new arrival within the meshes of the net by means of which letters are swung to and fro.

Within the purlieus of the city the postman's round is humdrum, but in the "rural districts," as the wilds are euphemistically called in official parlance, monotony gives



MAIL SLED STAGE RUNNING DURING THE WINTER BETWEEN THE RAILHEAD
AND HAZLETON.



Harry Wrathall.

THE DOG MAIL TRAIN RUNNING BETWEEN PRINCE RUPERT AND HAZLETON.
The depth of snow may be realised from the half-buried telegraph line at the left.

way to romance and adventure. The round may be one of 200 miles from end to end ; its completion out and home may mean three weeks' hard travelling, over a trail which is scarcely recognizable, by any type of vehicle that may be available, from a raft to horse's back, and when transport fails them "Shank's pony" becomes the only alternative. The elements may conspire together to defeat the most carefully laid plans of the authorities and the grim determination of the man on the round—but he must get through. It may rain as if presaging a second Deluge : the forest fire may smoke every trace of animal life out of the bush, converting the country into a scorching inferno ; the blizzard may rage in frigid fury, sucking the life out of all that comes within its rimy embrace, blotting out the trail beneath a white blanket several feet in thickness ; the rivers may swell and bar the path with a frenzied rush of white bubbling froth—but the mails must go on.

It comes as a shock to the city dweller with the postal service running like a clockwork machine to strike the conditions which prevail in the wilderness. A shack, decrepit and tumbling, which would be passed in disdain because appearance tends to show that it has long since come of age, compels earnest attention, for there, over the rhomboid shaped doorway are the magic letters "G. R. Post Office." Along the trail a slouching figure is seen mushing with mechanical tread. He is a sorry-looking piece of humanity when espied in the distance, and with his bag slung over his shoulder, gives the impression of being a hobo who has struck a rich vein of bad luck. You give him a cold hail, and the figure answers back just as monosyllabically and freezingly. As he approaches you are prompted to hold him up for conversation, but the stranger presses on, answering questions as he proceeds, and then, as he swings his arm round

you catch sight of the badge "Mailman." If the country happens to be so far advanced as to boast a crude frontier road, ever and anon you may hear the jangle of bells, and a light buggy comes reeling along at a breezy pace. As the driver lurches by he gives you a nod, but never the offer of a lift. He has His Majesty's mails aboard, and the bag of letters is of far greater importance than a hundred pounds or so of human flesh. Or, perhaps, you have hit the stage coach, as the tumbling-to-pieces aggregation of rough wood slung on four wheels without the intermediary of springs, is called. The chances are that it is packed to creaking point, with baggage and passengers, but there is only one bag aboard which occupies the mind of the driver. This is under his dickey, and he sits on it tightly to make doubly sure of its safety, because it is the property of the Postmaster-General.

I met one of these frontier postmen one day on his lonely "rural" round. The trail led through a swiftly running creek, not very deep, because it could be forded without one getting wet higher than the thighs, but tricky because the boulders forming its bed were always rolling about. The postman had forded this creek safely times without number, but on this particular occasion he fouled a large, slippery boulder, and before he realized what had happened, he had measured his length in the water, while the mail-bag went careering downstream. With great difficulty he recovered his charge, and when I came across him, he was seated before a roaring fire, which he had kindled, drying his precious letters one by one. Some two or three days later he crawled into the camp where I was staying, and as he tendered the missives apologetically, explained what had happened. The boys laughed heartily as they tore their respective letters open, and although some fearful ejaculations were muttered as frantic endeavour unravelled the pages stuck

together, there was not the slightest complaint. They thought themselves mighty lucky to have got their letters at all under the circumstances ; a vivid contrast to the habitual growler in the city, who is ready to send a four-page complaint to the authorities because a letter happens to be delayed half a day through inadvertence. In the wilderness it is far better that a message from home should be delivered in a semi-mashed-potato state than not at all.

At times it is a mighty hard struggle to get the mail through. We struck one waggon road, and were held up completely by the devastation wrought by a bush fire. For half a mile the highway was littered with the trunks of huge trees, which had crashed to the ground because the flames had undermined their roots. While we were pondering upon the situation, the mailman in his buggy came up. He was not perturbed. He looked at the healthy maze of trees, and then at his axe. A few seconds' reflection convinced him that it would take him days to clear his way through, so he backed his buggy into the bush, detached his mount, pulled out the bag of mails, hitched them on the back of his animal, and shouldering the reins, trudged into the scrub, following an Indian trail. It was a wide detour, but it led right round the burnt area for a distance of fifteen miles, to the next station, which he completed on foot, arriving at his destination about six hours late. That was all the inconvenience the bush fire had caused. He spent the night at the post, made his collection—performed once every three weeks—shouldered his bag, and tramped back to the spot where the buggy had been abandoned temporarily. Once more his horse was harnessed up, and with a whistle and a “git up,” he started off on the homeward jaunt, as if bush fires and burnt-fall were the very last obstructions encountered on his journey.

There are plenty of openings for those who wish to serve His Majesty the King in the humble rôle of postmen through the "rural" districts. Periodically advertisements are issued, calling for men and tenders for the delivery and collection of letters over a certain distance. The scale of pay varies. In some cases it will run to £10 per month; in others a higher rate of wages prevails. It all depends upon the country to be served and the difficult nature of the task.

For instance, in New British Columbia I found that the postman started off from Quesnel with his vehicle bound for Fraser Lake, following the frontier road, and completing from twenty to thirty miles a day, the night being spent at the stations of the Yukon Telegraph. The Telegraph cabins serve as post-offices where stamps may be purchased, letters posted, and parcels handed in. On the other hand, the Skeena River was the highway for postal communication so far as Hazelton, whence the mails were sent so far south as Bulkley Cabin, a distance of about 100 miles. For points between Bulkley on the one, and Fraser Lake on the other side, the postman had to make a big cross-country jaunt from Bella Coola, a small cove on the Pacific coast, and consequently the Telegraph cabin at Burns Lake, which is mid-way between Bulkley and Fraser Lake, was in an isolated position, and the mails were infrequent—but sure. I posted a letter home at Burns Lake, while making the North-West Passage by land, and then pushed on towards the Skeena River. I arrived home about eight weeks after I left this cabin, and the letter I had posted followed me a week later—but it reached its destination safely and soundly.

The authorities make a point that all those engaged in pushing back the veil of the unknown shall be supplied with a mail service. Accordingly, the very uttermost

camps of those engaged in railway surveying and construction receive letters as close to a regular schedule as is humanly possible. The letters are sent forward by train to the railhead. Here they are picked up by the post-master of the end-of-steel town, and by him handed over to the postman. The latter starts off on his trudge from camp to camp, strung out over a distance of 150 miles. The general day's round is about twenty miles from one resident engineer's camp to another. He will breakfast about seven at one camp, start out, reach the next in time for the midday meal, and pushing on, gain the succeeding camp for supper. He will put up for the night at this point, hitting the trail again about seven the following morning. He is well tended, receives first-class meals, and a good shake down for the night, these requirements being supplied free of cost, so that his £10 or thereabouts is clear, unencumbered pocket money. On the outward jaunt he drops letters only, collecting correspondence on his return trip.

The scene on the latter occasion at a camp where the postman is pausing for meals is a busy one. Every member of the community will be found writing as for dear life, so as to complete his letter in time, because the postman makes no delays. He discusses his meal and packs his bag at once, because he knows just how long it is going to take him to reach the next camp in time for the evening meal.

I encountered one or two experiences of this adherence to system, even in the bush. The engineer at one camp had not completed a report which he was anxious to mail to headquarters. The postman had started off at his stated hour, but the engineer, to catch the mail, had saddled a horse and ridden full tear after the walking mailman, had handed over his letter, and returned, making a twenty-mile ride. In another case an Indian

was pressed into service. The postman had about four hours' start. But the Indian, springing on to his cayouse, as he calls his pony, had sped off under the incentive of a 5-dollar bill, if he caught the mailman. At every constructional camp the Indian jerked out the query : "Mailman gone ?" Receiving an acquiescent grunt, he asked : "How long ?" The information forthcoming, the Red rider dug his spurs into the flanks of his steed, clattered forward over deadfall, and crashed through creeks as if the going were as easy as galloping over a green sward. But he caught the mailman in the middle of his supper, handed over the letter, hastily swallowed a meal himself, and then, jumping astride his mount, tore off into the waning day, to notify the fact that the letter was safely mailed, and to pick up his hard earned 5-dollar bill.

The postman, as a rule, under these conditions, follows the best route open to him. He is not supplied with any conveyance, so has to walk from point to point shedding or accumulating his load as he plods through cutting, over embankment, across swamp, slipping and sliding among boulders, fording creeks, and braving rushing rivers as best he can.

The mailman's lot is facilitated so far as the conditions will admit. If he is forced to proceed afoot, his load comprises first-class mail only—that is, letter-packets. Newspapers, books, and parcels are sent along at irregular intervals. If a freighting team happens to be going in the direction of certain camps, and has room aboard for a consignment of heavier mail-matter, it takes it, but no delivery is guaranteed. Postal packets, apart from letters, are regarded more in the light of luxuries ; it is the letter which receives such unremitting care, and for the safe conveyance of which much hardship and toil are suffered. Of course, when a frontier road, with rivers and creeks spanned by bridges, are open, then the

wheeled vehicle which is pressed into service carries all kinds and descriptions of mail matter, the contract between the individual and the Government being drawn up to this end. Even then the undertaking only holds good throughout the summer months, when wheeled-traffic is possible. In the winter different arrangements prevail, book packets and parcels being held up five months or so in some cases.

On the waterways, so far as possible, the mail is handled by the shallow draft steamboats, which proceed up and down, the passing vessels being hailed by the mailman through the intermediary of a flag. Even boats which are not scheduled to stop at certain points for passengers or freight will halt momentarily to pick up the mail.

Winter demands the reorganization of facilities and methods for handling the mail, and this is the period when the task of the authorities is beset with innumerable perils and dangers. The rivers being frozen almost into solid blocks of ice, navigation is out of the question. Delivery on foot is equally impracticable. On the frontier road it may be possible to maintain a service with horse-drawn sleds, when all descriptions of postal packets may be handled with ease, but otherwise there is only one possible means of keeping the service going—by dog trains.

The Government concludes arrangements with private individuals who are in the possession of well-equipped vehicles of this description, and the man is left absolutely to his own devices to complete his undertaking. But it is rough and exciting work. A train of huskies can handle a weight of 200 pounds, but this available weight has to be divided between the mail-load and the requirements for the man upon his journey. As may be supposed, nothing but letter packets are handled under these conditions. While sometimes a single man will set out with his precious load, the train more often comprises a party

of three, each having a team and train, and with the mail divided between the three sleds, while a fourth man will go ahead on his snow-shoes to pick up the trail. This method is preferable, because often the mailmen encounter obstructions or get into such tight corners that extrication is only possible by combined superhuman exertion, and would be quite beyond a mailman travelling alone.

The dogs are powerful brutes, lithe and active, and able to keep going, when the emergency arises, upon the most slender fare. Their stamina is wonderful, equalled possibly only by their ferocity, which occasionally finds an outlet when the brutes rise in rebellion. Then lively times are witnessed. The murderous whip is the only means whereby they can be made tractable once more, but the process of subjugating their tempers is one of considerable exertion on the part of the mailman. One of the boys who ran one of these trains on the outskirts of Ontario for three successive winters, concluded that he had the most unruly and vicious huskies that ever were harnessed to a sled. When they got into their stride, they ate up the miles one after the other in fine record-breaking form, but the great trouble was to get them to start. Every morning there was a row. First they started fighting among themselves, letting pandemonium loose in the heart of the wilderness. The mailman's usual procedure was to jump among them with his whip, letting it out right and left indiscriminately in a determined endeavour to separate the brutes. Ten minutes' exercise of this weapon generally brought about the desired result. Then came the difficulty of harnessing them up. One and all were sullen, snarling, and evil-looking. The mailman had to keep both his eyes and ears open, with whip handy to let fly at the slightest sign of attack. They watched him to and fro like a coyote stalking the trail, and he recognized that it was only the



HIS MAJESTY'S MAIL BEING CARRIED UP-COUNTRY ON SLEDs HAULED BY
DOG TEAMS.



Harry Wrathall.

DOG TEAM MAIL RUNNING BETWEEN PRINCE RUPERT AND HAZLETON (200 MILES)
CROSSING THE SKEENA RIVER.

fear of the whip which kept them submissive. The safer practice was for one man to harness up and pack the sleighs, while the other stood by vigilantly watching the animals with whip upraised, ready to bring the steel-like thong down with enough force to cut through a brute's back-bone.

Another mailman, who ran the mail by dog train in the Yukon country, related how every morning there was a tussle between him and the dogs. He had a long pull of about 300 miles with his train, and sometimes went accompanied and sometimes alone. Under the latter conditions the brutes thought they had the upper hand—at least, they fought desperately to gain it. When they were called to be harnessed up, they point-blank refused to stir a muscle. Even the threat of the whip did not provoke a blink. Every dog in the team had to be lashed and thrashed before he would submit to harnessing, and then when the whole train was ready they had to be given another liberal dose of whip-lash before they would move. When they got going there was no holding them in, and in favourable weather he was hard put to it to keep up with them. Those huskies' interpretation of the word "kindness" was a sound thrashing of five minutes' duration, by the end of which time both animals and man were somewhat distressed.

As may be supposed, the mail, being consigned to such a tender vehicle as a dog sleigh, and having to be carried under such adverse conditions, suffers severely from the ordeal at times. When a dog train gets into its stride, and the snow has packed hard, it makes a good, healthy pace; but the heavy carpet of snow conceals dangers untold, and the sled is not built to withstand too prolonged or heavy a game of battledore and shuttlecock. It bounces and lurches from side to side, although the mailman tries valiantly to keep it steady. If it strikes a tree stump smartly it shoots off like an arrow shot from

a bow glancing off at the most unexpected angle, often to pull up against another stump on the opposite side of the narrow pathway. Now and again the sled will give a shoot into the air, and come down with a healthy crash to hit a tree stump a fair end-on smashing blow. When 200 pounds is moving at the velocity of four or six miles an hour and hits an immovable mass, something happens, and it is not the tree which suffers ; then the animals have to be hitched up while the sled is being repaired as best the conveniences at hand will permit.

Occasionally, as a result of a collision, the contents get scattered to the four winds. One of the boys related an experience which befell him during the previous winter. He had an average load aboard, and had a clear 100 miles run in front of him. The snow was hard, giving a surface like an asphalt roadway, and the train was making fine time. He calculated that he would pull into the shack serving as the night camping-place in excellent time, and be able to get a good rest, which had been denied him for some nights previously, owing to the thick heavy weather which had rendered the going slow and arduous. They were sailing along, and he was humming merrily at the prospect, when suddenly there was a crash, a lurch, the sleigh flew into the air like a rocket, he measured his length on the snow, and ploughed along for about three yards on his head. He picked himself up and found himself being wreathed in what he thought were the biggest snowflakes he had ever seen in his life ; the sleigh had cannoned a hidden obstruction with healthy force, had leaped into the air, and in so doing the mail-bag had been ripped up by a murderous snag. What he thought were snowflakes were the letters from the bag ! They were scattered all round him like leaves.

"Three hours that smash cost me," he growled, as he related the episode. He hitched up the dogs and then went very carefully over the ground searching for letters.

Some were caught in the scrub, others were impaled on snags, while others were blown twenty feet or more from the point of the smash. Fortunately the weather held up, and there was very little wind, otherwise, as he significantly muttered, "I guess some of the stiffies would be still wondering where their letters had gone astray." In his own mind, however, he did not think that a single missive was lost.

More unfortunate was the result of another accident. The mailmen reached camp dead beat from battling with a fierce blizzard for over ten hours. It had been exhausting work getting the dog train along that day, and even the animals bore signs of the fight with the elements. The men fed the dogs, piled up a huge fire, prepared their supper, and before it was completed they fell asleep. When they woke in the morning they sat up, looked round for the laden sleighs, and then rubbed their eyes. The vehicles were nowhere to be seen! They could not have been stolen in the night, since the dogs would have given the alarm. What had happened? They jumped hastily to their feet and rushed to the place where the sleds had been stacked. The truth was soon told. Being dead-tired they had not noticed that the vehicles and their precious freight had been left standing near the fire. The flames being fanned that way by the wind first had scorched and then had consumed them. Not a letter was left, only small heaps of ashes, some charred leather, and a few screws and nails!

Another dog train mail had a very narrow escape. The party were cutting across a frozen river. The ice appeared safe enough, for there was not a smirch on the white covering. The train was about halfway across when the dogs in the front vehicle gave a loud, frenzied yelp and jumped madly forward; they were up to their girths in water. The mailman on snowshoes let out with his whip, and the whole safely cleared the

hidden danger ; but the following sleighs did not fare so well. They crashed into the hole left by the first vehicle, and the dogs were soon swimming madly for their lives, in danger of being dragged down by the laden vehicles. The mailmen grabbed the sleighs, and smartly whipping out their jack-knives cut the mail-bags loose, throwing them clear of the hole, and hacked the traces in twain to give the dogs a chance. One man slipped through the ice, but shooting out his arms kept his head above water and was pulled out shivering with the cold. Two sleighs were lost, but the dogs and mails were saved. The party, in crossing the frozen river, had stumbled upon an unseen crack in the ice, and but for the presence of mind of the mailmen a nasty accident would have had to be chronicled. All they lost was two sleds, a greater part of their outfit, and half of their provisions. Regaining the bank they hastily improvised a sled and pushed ahead. Fortunately they were only about thirty miles from their destination when the accident occurred.

One of the hardest stretches of country over which the mails have to be handled at present in Canada is the winter pull from the inland terminus of the Yukon and White Pass Railway to Dawson City. During the summer months the waterway is the channel along which the Royal Mail flows to and fro, but in the winter, when the Yukon River is gripped in ice, the mails have to be sent overland. And over what a road ! In the summer the mails could not go that way even if there were no other available because pack animals would sink to their girths in a slime more tenacious than glue ; because the road traverses wicked muskeg and tundra for practically the whole distance between the two points. Subterranean springs innumerable, the thawed snow, and the melting glaciers transform the whole ground into a kind of soddened sponge, where horses cannot get a foothold, and where wheels slip out of sight.

When the ground is frozen hard and is covered with snow, the surface offered for the sleigh is excellent, but now and again everything is thrown sixes and sevens by a warm spell which catches the passing traffic at a heavy disadvantage. Also the grades are fierce, ranging from 1 in 5 to 1 in 10. So heavy is the travelling that the sleighs carrying the mails have to be drawn by six horses, and these have to be changed every twenty-two miles, three relays being made in the course of a single day's travelling lasting about twelve hours. The road is well defined so far as this task is practicable in such a country, though at times it is wiped out of existence by playful antics of Nature, and it costs the Government a neat little sum every year to keep it open. At intervals of every twenty miles there are convenient shacks—memories of the "blood-freezing days of '96" when the North-West Mounted Police were keeping law and order, so far as Canada was concerned, in the Klondyke.

This stretch of mail road is considered to be about the worst in the whole Dominion. Certainly it would be difficult to find one more arduous and exasperating. When first opened, dog trains sufficed to meet the situation, but the traffic during the winter between the two posts developed to such a degree that to-day only horses can cope with it. One is able to mail a letter from London to the Klondyke for a penny, but every missive must be carried at a dead loss between Whitehorse and Dawson, owing to the demands upon twenty-four horses, and with hay at £20 per ton !

The mailman's life is decidedly varied and exciting, but apparently there appears to be no difficulty in getting an adequate supply of right men for the work. It certainly constitutes a means of earning a respectable living in Canada, and one which has many decided attractions for men of the true British temperament.

CHAPTER XVI

WHERE AND HOW TO FARM IN A NEW COUNTRY

THE agricultural labourer and small farmer who, dismayed with the slender prospects confronting him in these islands, decides to try his luck in Britain across the Atlantic, is sorely perplexed as to where he shall settle in that vast country, and how he shall set about the land. He is assailed with the advice "to place his services at the disposal of a Canadian farmer to learn the business ; to become familiar with the Canadian ways and means of doing things." In other words, he is urged to teach the Westerner the science of the soil in return for a starvation wage.

This is about the most doubtful advice that the new arrival could follow. The average Western farmer is an overrated personality. He knows nothing about even the rudiments of his craft ; fertilization is an art beyond his knowledge ; while how to obtain the maximum yield from the soil without exhausting it is a matter about which he is quite in the dark. He boasts about his bounteous crops, ignoring the circumstance that he himself does not stir a hand to assist in their propagation. After he has ploughed up the land with his much-lauded steam or petrol-driven plough, and has seeded it to flax, wheat, oats, and so on, he leaves it to its own devices, to bring forth what it can. If he wishes to increase his aggregate production he does not attempt to study the soil to consummate this end, but merely ropes in a further area of virgin prairie for cultivation.

The Canadian is the absolute antithesis of the competent farmer—indolent, ignorant, and conceited to boot. The results he achieves are not due to his own exertions, but to a kindly pity on the part of Nature, who produces the maximum in return for the minimum of work on the part of the man in possession.

Agricultural economists have realized this attitude of "being proud in his own conceit" which is manifested by the Western farmer. The same story is being told in the United States, so it is not peculiar to the land stretching to the Arctic circle. These authorities see the day when Nature will tire of helping the ignorant and incompetent, and will give him a severe kick in the back to bring him to his senses. It has happened in the United States, and it will befall Canada. The grain-growing superiority of the United States has passed to Canada. The last-named country to-day is in danger of being relegated to a low position by Australia, the Argentine, Russia, and Siberia, where farming as an art is practised. The Canadian is mighty proud when quoting wheat statistics, and has been afflicted as a result of boasting and advertisement with an acute attack of swelled head. It comes as a nasty shock to his pride to learn that France, with an area about one-fifteenth that of Canada, and with a population six times as great, can grow within its own borders, not only more grain than Canada at present produces, but sufficient to support its own people; and that Denmark, one of the smallest countries in Europe, as an exporter of dairying produce, has not a rival throughout the world.

From my own observations of the wasteful and incompetent methods I would urge the British emigrant not to follow in the Western Canadian's footsteps so far as this handicraft is concerned, but to resume in his new, just what he practised in his old, home. If the Britisher

wishes to investigate Canadian farming as it should be practised, then let him amble through the maritime provinces, where may be found a liberal commingling of the best and old-time British and French blood, with all the agricultural instincts developed to the finest degree, where the practice and produce is comparable with that of the most important agricultural countries of Europe.

It is only necessary to cite one instance of the incompetence of the Western farmer—the “mammoth grain-grower,” as he is apt to call himself. I was visiting a prairie homestead, and with that true Canadian hospitality I was invited to stay to supper—high tea or dinner it would be called in Britain, according to the social status of the host. There was only one fresh article of diet on the table! The milk was tinned; the butter came from Nova Scotia via the packing building; the vegetables and meats were examples of the canner’s art; the preserves hailed from California, in tins, or were prepared in the purlieus of Battersea and Soho. The only local production was the bread! I questioned the farmer as to the reason for this state of affairs. He replied that he would see Canada to perdition before he would raise a hand to cultivate vegetables and fruit, or keep a mixed farm! When the wheat was in, he was off, and that was an end to manual exertion so far as he was concerned. In other words, his yearly life was four months on the farm watching other people work, and eight months down south having a roaring time.

The Britisher, in common with the agriculturist from Northern, Central, and Southern Europe, has tired of serving such masters as these for £2 or £3 per month, with everything found for four months, and being left to his own devices to ward off starvation for the remainder of the year. Any newly-arriving back-to-the-



EARLY DAYS IN A SETTLER'S LIFE IN A NEW COUNTRY: A PIONEER'S PRIMITIVE PLOUGH AND OXEN.

lander who knows his business prefers to settle upon a small tract of land to work out his own destiny. Hard work, knowledge, and thrift, always bring their own reward, and in Canada the prizes come home to roost very quickly.

Where to settle is a puzzle which is not to be solved easily and off-handedly, and the only reason for working with a Canadian farmer in the West, so far as I can see, is to keep things going while marking time, and making up the mind definitely whether Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or British Columbia, or the Maritime provinces shall be the future home. Farming-land of the most excellent description is still to be obtained fairly cheaply down Nova Scotia way, and in New Brunswick, Southern Quebec, and Southern Ontario, developed farms, the owners of which are anxious to get farther West, may be picked up easily by the man with a small capital. The British farmer would do well to reflect deeply before he ventures far West, as in the Maritime provinces there is greater settlement, and the markets are in closer and quicker communication, while when the moment comes, and the latest arrival has concluded that he would prefer the Great West, it is not difficult to dispose of one's holding at a remunerative figure.

The great difference between Eastern and Western Canada is that, while the former thinks and transacts in cents, the latter considers the dollar to be the basis for business. This is attributable to the fact that money is made much more easily and quickly between the Great Lakes and the Pacific, than between the Atlantic seaboard and the Lakes. The ninety-fifth meridian west of Greenwich is practically the dividing between cents and dollars. To the west rolls the undulating prairie, where one can enter into possession upon the virgin sod in the spring, and receive the worth of a crop in the first year ;

to the east extends the great ocean of forest, where clearing is slavery, and where one is lucky if one is able to clear and bring 160 acres under remunerative cultivation in the course of a generation.

The difference between Eastern and Western Canada was put very neatly to me by an old farmer who had tried his luck in both. "On one side I worked not for myself but for my family, who would follow me; on the other I started away at once, and have the prospect of being able to enjoy a little of the evening of life."

In the settled parts of the Eastern states, where development is practically complete, the new arrival has got to pay just as much for his land as he would in Britain, and his taxes are not much easier. The only things which save him are the increase of markets extending beyond the limits of the country, and the climate. All phases of farming become remunerative, whether it be stock-raising, dairying, market-gardening, or fruit-growing. If the British farmer continues in the rut which he practised at home he will spread his risks over a wide area, and all branches of the craft will be followed, so that, for instance, if his fruit fails, he will have the other sheet-anchors upon which to depend. In the Middle West the vogue is to place all the eggs in one basket, to concentrate all hopes and failures upon one product. If the fates are kind, the balance at the bank runs up like a thermometer dipped in boiling water; if a drought or other untimely visitation makes a stride your way, then you must consider the advisability of "hitting the hike," otherwise, moving elsewhere in search of a job, very thoughtfully.

Yet the Middle West to-day offers the greatest possibilities for mixed, or, to quote the vernacular, truck-farming. Prosperous towns are going ahead with astonishing rapidity, and the swelling populations show an ever-



OFF TO START A NEW HOME.

increasing and steady demand for the products of the market gardens in infinite variety. Eggs, poultry, butter, cream, potatoes, cabbages, lettuces, fresh meat, and flowers are in urgent request at such places as Winnipeg, Regina, Brandon, Calgary, Edmonton, and so on. As a matter of fact, the demand still completely, and for many years to come, will overwhelm the supply. There are more tinned comestibles sold in these centres to-day than similar edibles in their fresh condition, merely because the farmers within a stone's-throw of these markets will cling to the fallacy that "Wheat is king."

On the treeless prairie the period between occupation and production is very brief. The new arrival need not kick his heels about, nor toil from morning to night for many months, before the sweat of his brow meets with a fitting recompense. If the practice which I saw adopted by a hustling American family is followed, then this period is reduced to the absolute minimum.

This farmer had sold out his holdings down in Dakota, and had purchased a new farm of several hundred acres in Alberta—incidentally making a few thousand pounds over the transaction, owing to the farm down South fetching about £8 an acre, while the new one to the North had been purchased for less than £3 per acre—but had declined to dispose of his agricultural implements, which comprised a comprehensive power-plant. He saw the tools stowed away on the railway cars down in Dakota, and arranged that while he and his three sons of mature age should proceed Albertawards, his wife, and the children of younger age, should stay with friends in the United States.

The farmer and sons started off, and reaching their new home sized up the proposition, settling the situation for the homestead, and other details. They received intimation from the railway company that their imple-

ments had reached the station nearest the farm, and the cars were waiting in the siding. Ere the sun had got above the eastern horizon the party were *en route* for the railway-station, the trucks were unloaded, and in a short time the little party was jaunting homewards. Directly the farm was gained, all but one, the youngest son, set to work on the land. The ploughs were hitched to the tractor and the first furrow was started. The youngest son meanwhile saw to the preparation of the morning meal, and running up the A-tent, which was to serve as a home until there was spare time to commence erecting the homestead. By the time the first day drew to a close a respectably-sized patch of the prairie had been converted from the primeval green grass to gashes of brown, showing where the sod had been turned. The family kept at it day after day until the whole of the available area had been ploughed and seeded to flax. This accomplished, the party took the home in hand. By the autumn they told me they expected to have everything completed and in apple-pie order in readiness for the mother and the younger children. In this instance, therefore, less than six months were to see several hundred acres of flat land wrested from virginity, turned to bearing, and a healthy family settled in a substantial house.

The emigrant who is likely to succeed to the greatest advantage in the West is he who is blessed with a large and growing family. In Great Britain children are regarded as mill-stones around the necks of the parents ; in the far West they are unalloyed assets. One and all represent so much available labour, and the farmer who has a family of healthy, sturdy sons and daughters is in a state of independence so far as labour is concerned. Naturally the children toil hard and long because they realize that every ounce of exertion they put into the

father's farm is improving the value of their ultimate inheritance ; hence they work not for the present but for the future.

The man with a family will come to recognize the benefit of his offspring, if he is possessed of no, or very little, capital, and acquires a plot of Canadian freehold through the homestead or pre-emption law. This is the cheapest method whereby a new arrival may develop into a prosperous farmer. Certainly it possesses many drawbacks, which in several instances demand revision. At least five years of heavy gruelling have to be faced in order to receive the deeds entitling the homesteader to the land, and if fortune is not kind it is a terrible uphill struggle. But the man with no capital, although possessed of plenty of brains, brawn, and muscle, has a tight fit for a time in any country, and the difficulties in Canada are not much more formidable than those prevailing under similar conditions in other lands, although at first sight they appear to be. At the same time, the homesteading law is full of abuses and anomalies, although its conditions appear to be so simple to fulfil. There is no doubt but that a very large number of new arrivals who settle upon the land by virtue of the homestead law become disillusioned and dissatisfied with their lot within a very short time. Any man who enters into occupation of Canadian farms upon this principle, who has notched the thirty-fifth milestone in his life, must become reconciled to the fact that he is not labouring for himself and his own comfort, but for the next generation. In other words, he will have the grind and his children will have the dollars.

This feature is particularly pronounced in the timbered parts of the Dominion, such as Northern Ontario and British Columbia, where homesteading or pre-emption is possible. There clearing is back- and heart-breaking

work, and the homesteader is to be pitied, because he is unable to ease up in his labour owing to lack of capital. To enter into occupation of a railed-off piece of land half a mile square, where the trees are jammed so tightly together as to have a stiff struggle for existence, is about as dismal an outlook as one can conceive. It is little wonder that the average homesteader, new to the country, when he surveys this aspect, is smitten with a violent attack of home-sickness, and pauses to think whether it would not have been better to have stayed at home, despite the many fetters which shackled him there, than to tackle the Devil he does not know in the wilds.

The homesteader will be wise indeed if he steers wide of such forbidding country, where a hand-to-mouth existence, hard knocks, and exasperating kicks from fortune are certain to be his lot for many years. Getting in on the ground-floor is a wise stroke of enterprise when one is familiar with the conditions ; but the raw recruit is apt to have his buoyant enthusiasm knocked out of him when attempting to follow in the expert's tracks in this bid for fortune. He had far better cling to the highways and byways of civilization, where the isolation is not so acute, and where the loneliness does not precipitate madness. Britain is so densely populated that one does not experience any feelings of being cut off from one's fellow-creatures ; but when one is dumped into the wilds with the next-door neighbour possibly twenty or more miles away, a railway twice that distance, and where a newspaper is a luxury, the outlook is vastly different. Nor must one overlook the fact that the Dominion, in common with all such Continental countries in a similar latitude, suffers from the extremes of the two opposite seasons of the year. The country is in its best garb of attractiveness and magnetization in the spring, when the new arrival strikes it, but when the land



THE REWARD OF INDUSTRY AND PERSEVERANCE.

A farm in New British Columbia 500 miles from the nearest railway station. The holder of this ranch had to cut his way through the bush for sixty miles to gain this settlement. His prosperity is reflected in his crops and his substantial out-houses and farm buildings.

is gripped in an embrace stronger than steel for six months of the year, a vastly different picture is presented, and which the immigrant does not realize before he leaves his Homeland.

Of course, one can pitch into corners of the vast Dominion where the terrors of winter are mitigated by friendly natural influences. Whereas Northern Ontario, from its exposure to the north, receives the full brunt of the Arctic cold, the interior of British Columbia, on the other hand, owing to the Rockies forming a formidable barrier on the eastern border, thereby breaking up the cold blasts from the Polar regions, and the warm wind blowing off the Pacific, finding its way through the rifts in the coast range, render the inland plateau much more tenable during winter ; indeed, during the average winter it is possible to turn stock out of doors. The snowfall, on the whole, is not particularly heavy, and although the mercury in the thermometer at times is smitten with a desire to sink almost out of sight, such spells are of comparatively brief duration.

Central British Columbia, when opened up by the railway, will become the most attractive tract of the Dominion to the British settler—a vast country where he will be able to demonstrate his diversified and capable agricultural instincts to the full, with every advantage in his favour. Clearing here for the most part is not a soul-killing undertaking. In years gone by a terrific forest fire evidently swept the whole plateau, levelling the heavy timber growth to the ground to rot and to pile up a thick carpet of nutritive decayed vegetable matter. From the ashes of these destroyed timber giants has sprung a younger growth of cottonwood. True, it is very dense, but it may be cleared very readily by fire. If the flames are driven through one year, at such a time as not to burn up the thick piling of moss

and decayed leaves upon the top soil of silt, so as to scorch the life from the scrub and then left for the greater part of twelve months, by the time a second fire is driven through the mass the dead dried wood will be consumed like shavings, and the surface of the ground, with its plant-nourishing wealth, will escape unscathed. The stumps can be removed readily by the aid of a team of horses and a puller, which will yank them out just as rapidly one after the other as the hook can be hitched round them. The plough will find the soil easy to work, and when the decayed vegetable and moss on top are turned in, will be found capable of yielding any produce required in prolific quantities.

Nor is the undergrowth very regular in its extent. Scattered here and there freely among the dense brush are small open patches—little prairies—where the settler can establish himself comfortably and cultivate a small tract of ground sufficiently to keep him going until the rest of his holding is cleared. In fact, he should clear his land by instalments, extending his arable patch year by year by driving the surrounding wall of trees farther and farther back with the flames.

This plateau, nestling between the Rockies and the Cascades on the one hand, and reaching from peak-bound Yukon to the Fraser River on the other, will enable the British farmer to flourish *in excelsis*. The country is too undulating to permit the much-vaunted Canadian or American prairie farmer to come in with his mechanical outfit. He cannot get a long enough straight level drive to bring these implements to work with remunerative advantage. New British Columbia will never be overrun by the curse of wheat, but rather will be to the western coast, and its many cities and industrial hives, what Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are to the Atlantic seaboard; where the farmer will turn his attention to



THE NEW GARDEN OF CANADA.

the production of a little of everything, from potatoes to eggs, grain to pigs, turnips to dairying, and from cabbages to fruit and flowers.

The greater part of this country has been reserved for pre-emption, so that the man without capital is given a sporting chance in the race for fortune. Unfortunately, the British Columbia Government displayed tardy interest in the welfare of this individual, who, in reality, constitutes the backbone of every country, but let the land-grabbers and the speculators run riot over the land, looting the cream of the country, and they are now holding up the man who wants to work upon the soil. Land which these worthies bought for a paltry 4s. or 10s. per acre—much of it for less—is being held up for sale at £12 and £20 per acre, and as yet there is no railway, and no markets for the farmer! If such outrageous prices prevail under such conditions, what prices will be demanded when the arteries of communication and the centres of consumption become established?

The Dominion Government pursued a more intelligent and far-sighted policy when it threw the Great North-West open for settlement upon its acquisition from the Hudson Bay Company. The cream of the land was taken over for the settler without means by the establishment of the Homestead Law. When the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven through British Columbia, the Dominion Government reserved all the lands in the province within twenty miles of the line on either side, this being known as the "Railway Belt." Similarly, the Dominion Government railed off 3,500,000 acres of land in the Peace River country, lying between the 120th and 122nd meridians, practically keeping the speculator out of business for twenty miles on either side of the river. The benefit of this astute move is being reaped by the settler of to-day, now that the Peace River

country is attracting such large numbers of farmers; indeed, the facility with which magnificently fertile land in that country can be obtained, despite the fact that the nearest railway line is some 300 miles away, is responsible for the migration of the best of the farming element from the more southern parts of the country. In the course of a few years a little kingdom, entirely self-supporting, will be found to be well established and flourishing without the general handmaids of commerce, along the banks of this mighty river within the limits of the Government reserve.

A practice which is growing in the Dominion, and which possesses many attractive features, is the letting of farms which have been acquired under the Homestead Law. The settler complies with the requisition of this legislative enactment by improving his property, and in due course secures unfettered title to his property. The farm is then leased as a going concern at a remunerative figure, the class of farmer taking avail of this method being one of small capital, who does not wish to sink his all in a farm immediately upon arrival, and who yet has no intention of hiring his labour merely to another farmer. By taking a farm upon a short tenancy, he is able to become familiarized with the conditions of Canadian farming. There is no need to touch the capital, and yet it can be increased from the available balance upon the tenanted farm after defraying all outgoings, such as rent, as well as living expenses. The method suits the original settler, as it affords him an opportunity to get away from the spot to which he has been glued for six years, while his property is being maintained meanwhile, and also bringing in a certain income. Many farms have changed hands on this system, the tenant after a short while concluding that the property which he is working is lucrative, and accordingly he completes the purchase, tentative terms

to this end being drawn up as a rule at the time the tenancy is taken over. The system possesses many recommendatory features, because the tenant farmer is not compelled to retain possession of the land beyond a certain period, should he conclude that it does not meet his requirements. Moreover, when he completes the purchase, he is not necessarily called upon to invest the whole of his capital therein ; but, owing to the land being improved and developed, is able to negotiate a mortgage with one of the banks on the property with which to liquidate a substantial proportion of the purchase price.

During the past twelve years or so homesteading has been going ahead by leaps and bounds, and at the present day many settlers who have become freely entitled to their holding are negotiating its disposal by this system. It offers the man with small capital an excellent opportunity to become established as a farmer with the minimum of expense, and without a long wait between occupation and productiveness, which must necessarily ensue under the Homestead Law. At the same time, he does not sink his little all in a speculation which subsequently he may regret. The short tenancy gives adequate time to turn round and to find out whether one can settle down into a promising proposition. It is just the same as taking over a house in England with the option to purchase.

CHAPTER XVII

CHANCES FOR THE YOUNG ENGINEER

AT the present moment there is a crying need throughout the whole Dominion for young engineers. This, indeed, is one of the most lucrative and promising vocations of the day. The work is not confined to a single field. Here dozens of surveyors are required to plot the path for a railway, or to supervise construction of one already in hand ; there, a call arises for men to lay out a new town ; somewhere else virgin land has to be mapped out for settlement, and so on. In every instance the task possesses some particular fascination, and the prospects are equally attractive.

The most exciting phases of this profession probably are associated with new railways and the mapping of unopened country. Vast stretches of the Dominion are as yet practically unknown, and certainly are uncharted. Therefore, the man with the transit and level is for ever treading new ground ; the unexpected in which he revels is constantly looming up in all its grim reality.

Railway surveying, perhaps, is the most promising and exciting, as well as dangerous, branch of this profession, more especially in connection with the preliminary work. The party comprises only a few souls, the task of which is to drive through the bush to reconnoitre the country, recording the general physical characteristics, and elaborating a dozen or more alternative routes for the projected steel highway. The work is carried out during the winter

and summer without cessation, the vehicles of the season being pressed into service to transport the little band from point to point as the work demands. True, the grind is hard and exhausting, but the prizes to be won by the skilled and competent are well worth the risks and fatigue incurred. The way may lie along the level bank of a rushing river, where progress is tolerably simple and easy as accumulated deadfall may permit. On the other hand, it may involve a perilous crawl among the precipices and crags of a mountain flank, where a false step may bring about swift and fatal disaster. Or the engineers may have to force their way through a yawning gulch, the cliffs of which sheer up on either side to a dizzy height, where the floor of the cañon is occupied by a foaming torrent which laves the walls on either hand. Then the men have to perform Blondin-like feats, crawling gingerly along with their instruments on logs slung from iron chains and ropes supported from crowbars driven into the solid rocky face.

There are the dangers of Nature in a thousand different forms to face, but yet with care and the display of common sense one and all may be safely circumvented. Of course, occasionally "hard luck" will exact its inevitable toll, but nowadays the precautions observed to insure the safety of the party, combined with the caution born of long experience, render an accident to life and limb very remote. After all, however, the average surveying engineer in the West would not give a hang for the job unless there was a strong atmosphere of excitement and adventure associated with his enterprise. The work makes a man almost uncannily resourceful, and the more he is thrown up against it, the more thoroughly he enjoys the episode.

There was one young Scottish surveying engineer I met spying out a path for a railway among the Rocky Moun-

tains. His advance brought him to the bank of the Athabasca River at one of its worst points. The main channel, swinging along at a frantic speed, and about 400 feet in width, curled wickedly round a projecting ledge of the mountain flank. That ledge had got to be surveyed, but the question was how to get across the river. The engineer was alone with his instrument and an axe. He rummaged round, and found a few dry logs, which he laid side by side in the water, and lashed together with willow thongs. It was a crazy raft in all conscience, but so long as it would hold together sufficiently to enable him to gain the opposite bank he did not care. He stepped on its deck, and under a smart push with his pole drove the argo into the stream. Instantly it was caught up and thrown forwards, the sudden jerk wellnigh throwing the engineer off his feet. But to his dismay, the raft gave signs of foundering before he had got 50 feet from the bank. It sunk until his feet were submerged, and, to make matters worse, fouled a snag, which strained its frail construction still more. By dint of great effort he cleared the obstruction, but it brought immersion up to his thighs. Fearing a sudden divorce between himself and his raft, he grabbed his instrument under one arm, paddling meanwhile as well as he could with the free hand. As he half expected, the raft collapsed under the strain, and he had to cover the last 30 feet by swimming, keeping his transit with difficulty above the water. In this way he gained the bank, shook himself, examined his instrument to see that it had suffered no damage from the unexpected ducking, and then without further ado proceeded with his work, picking up the bearings on the opposite river-bank as if he had trodden an ordinary trail, instead of having an exciting grapple with a turbulent glacial waterway.

Every surveying engineer associated with a railway

can relate adventures without end. The life is one continuous round of excitement and romance. In the summer, when the weather is dry and the sun is hot, scorching everything to tinder, the forest fire comes along with its relentless rush, smoking out the surveying corps like bees from a hive. Then there is a mad scamper to safety, everything but the precious transit being discarded in the headlong rush. In winter it is the snow and blizzard which are feared. The going is rough. The snow drifts into huge billows, concealing dangers untold. A crack and a creak, and the engineer, perhaps, has shot through a crust of snow into a cavity walled in by the trunks of prone trees, with the dead branches, sharper than bayonets, bristling on every hand. To clamber out is wellnigh impossible, especially when shod with snowshoes, and the luckless surveyor has to be hauled unceremoniously to the outer air by ropes lowered into the hole and looped round his waist.

At times excitement takes quite another turn. An engineer related to me that one day he was busily engaged in running the location line through very thick scrub. He was deeply absorbed in his work, and was shouting instructions to the rodman and chainman. Suddenly he looked round, and his heart wellnigh flew through the crown of his head. Standing less than 4 feet away was a big grizzly, looking at the transit and the surveyor with quizzical interest. Being unarmed, the engineer's first impulse was to shin up the nearest tree, but then he thought that the bear might vent its rage upon the transit, in which event work would be held up indefinitely until a new instrument was obtained. A surveyor will no more think of abandoning his transit in the wilderness on such occasions than a captain will desert his sinking ship. The engineer with much trepidation decided that the best thing he could do under the circumstances was

to continue his work as if the animal were non-existent. Accordingly, he fussed around his transit with Bruin in view of the corner of one eye, and alert to seek self-preservation should the brute decide upon a closer acquaintance. He had a lithe jack-pine in the corner of his other eye in which to seek refuge if the occasion arose. Thus they stood for about three minutes—it seemed like as many hours to the engineer—when the grizzly sheered off into the brush once more, and was lost to sight.

Topographical surveying assumes a different aspect. In this case the young engineer must be prepared to spend many months at a time imprisoned in the silent wastes of tall timbers, living on a meagre diet replenished liberally from the storehouse of Nature, and contending with dangers of infinite variety. During my passage down the Fraser River from its source I happened upon a small survey party far, far from the madding crowd. The railway was coming down the valley, some 200 miles in length, and settlers, attracted by the fertility of the soil, were anxious to get in on the ground-floor; so, to meet the situation, the Government had sanctioned a survey being made, so that the whole country might be plotted out to facilitate the granting of land to the intrepid spirits who are prepared to risk everything to be first in possession. When we entered the zone of operations via our canoes, we saw evidences of the triangulations on every hand, and at last ran the main body of surveyors to earth. It was a small camp pitched about 100 miles from the nearest frontier town, and over 400 miles from the nearest railway-station. We gave the customary halloo, and, as it was Sunday morning, succeeded in finding the whole party in camp. All told, they numbered less than a dozen souls. We inquired with the customary hospitality if the engineers happened to have any letters which they desired to be posted,



THE MAN WITH "THE TRANSIT AND LEVEL."

inasmuch as such parties are entirely dependent upon casual passers-by for the carriage of letters to the nearest post-office.

They had been up in the country for three months, and had several letters, some of which were over a week old, waiting to be taken over. But there was another difficulty. Could we take down a sick man? One of the party, while cleaving the narrow passage through the trees through which the surveyor takes his observations, had been so unlucky as to have a slip with his axe. It had struck a boulder while being swung, had turned, and had pulled up short and sharp in the axeman's leg. His comrades had tended the wicked injury as best they could upon a sparse typical bush diet and limited medicine-chest, but it was urgent that he should be taken out. We regarded our deeply laden canoes with anxiety; another 150 pounds would have placed us in an awkward predicament, as we were riding with our gunwales only 4 inches clear, and there were some ugly stretches of water ahead. We questioned the sick surveyor, to find that his wound was healing as well as could be expected under the circumstances, though the ordeal had pulled him down badly. Then we mentioned that a few days behind us another boat was coming downstream light, and could easily take him aboard if he could hold out. He decided to wait rather than imperil our safety, as he knew the Fraser only too well, and the most skilful navigation that is demanded to compass its innumerable dangers.

These engineers were confronted with an ugly task. The river-banks were lined with trees and brush stretching from the water's edge to the line on the mountain-sides where snow meets vegetable life, as dense as an African jungle. It had never been penetrated by man in the world's history. The surveyors were quite unable to drive their lines into the innermost recesses of the

country in the time available for their operations, so were merely carrying out a rough survey to a distance of one mile back from the river.

The camp was well stocked with provisions of the usual bush description. The wages ranged from 12s. 6d. per day for the axemen to about 21s. per day for the surveyors. In this particular instance the men were not in direct Government employment, although engaged in preparing a topographical survey of the Government land. The task had been entrusted to a firm for a certain contracted figure, and it was up to the latter to complete the job with the best profit to itself. At first sight this might appear to be somewhat unsatisfactory, with a tendency to cut salaries to a low figure, but this is a method which is seldom practised under such conditions.

In another instance, while tramping through the forests of Northern British Columbia, we happened upon a Government survey party. It was engaged in mapping out the hinterland. The camp of tents was pitched in an attractive situation beside a sylvan lake, the commissariat was well stocked and varied, and there were the services of an expert cook. The party were out in the field at the time of our visit, and were entrusted with a tolerably large order, which would keep them busy for a good three months ahead—practically to the end of the season. Then they were detailed to move about eighty miles northwards, where a second camp was to be established, and where they would be kept engaged practically throughout the winter. In this instance there appeared to be only one complaint—levied by the cook. Every other man in the party was enabled to ride from place to place upon a saddle-horse, but the chief of the kitchen was compelled to walk, which he regarded as a hardship. Evidently, in this instance, the powers that be considered that pedestrian exercise from camping-place to camping-

place would tend to keep the autocrat of the kitchen in prime condition after long rests at stationary points.

In this class of work the surveyor can generally look forward to a steady salary of 16s. per day, with everything found. As his engagement will generally last over several months, and he is buried in the heart of the wilds, where money is useless, its accumulation cannot be prevented. The result is that, when he comes out, he will often find a solid £100, £150, or more, awaiting his arrival in the city. The only expenditure he will possibly have incurred during his sojourn in the wilds will be the cost of replenishing his wardrobe, tobacco, and other little luxuries.

On the railway, however, the work is steadier, though perhaps more exacting, and this is where the young British engineer who has just completed his apprenticeship stands the greatest chance. He may be disgusted to find, upon his arrival, that his years of technical inculcation have been wasted apparently, as he will be called upon to start operations at the bottom of the ladder, and will have to shoulder the axe in order to drive the narrow lines through the trees to enable the triangulations to be made. But one and all have to start at this point. The trained British engineer has the advantage over the majority of his native colleagues in that he rises through the subsequent stages of front and rear chainman and rodman to the manipulation of the transit and level in the course of a few weeks. Ability and skill will out, and although it appears as if he be going over the same ground twice in his life, the second course is by no means so wasted as he may at first sight suppose. It serves to familiarize him with the Canadian ways of doing things, in which there is certain to be some divergence from the methods practised at home.

The wages are by no means contemptible, bearing in mind that the expenses are practically a negligible

quantity, that there is no social position to maintain, and that a liberal and varied board is included. The engagements are by the month, and in the humble capacity of axeman £7 per month is to be earned. When he is promoted to the position of front chainman he receives no increase in his salary, but when he is deputed to act as rear chainman he will have his income raised to £8 per month. The next step on the ladder is to rodman, bringing with it an extra pound per month in salary. The young engineer will remain in this niche just so long as his knowledge and skill permit. If he is expert he will very soon make a big jump to the handling of the transit and level, and in a single step he will better himself to the extent of £15 per month. This is not the limit of his climb. The plums of the profession are still within his reach, and each one that is picked up brings with it a corresponding financial improvement. From surveyor he will be pushed up to resident engineer, and will have the supervision of a section of track varying from two to ten or twelve miles under his charge at a wage of £25 per month. At the first opportunity he has the post of assistant to the divisional engineer open to him, so long as brains justify his promotion, and then he will find his pocket enriched by a further £10 per month. The next jump is a big one, bringing with it almost a doubling in salary, inasmuch as he will be made divisional engineer at £60 per month. There are further rungs to the ladder if he cares to push forward, each step bringing with it a proportional augmentation of his income. There is nothing to prevent an ambitious young man climbing from the position of axeman at £85 per annum to a responsible position at £1,500 or £2,000 a year in the space of five or six years, providing sufficient industry is displayed.

The establishment of towns in the great West has opened another field for the surveying engineer's activities. This, indeed, is a rapidly widening market, inas-

much as new towns are being born in the Far West practically at the rate of one a day. Every town site means the employment of a certain number of engineers to complete the lay-out of the new community, the demarcation of the streets, and the pegging-out of the building lots. In this work the wages range from 10s. per day for the axeman to 16s. a day for the man with the instruments, with board found. Each job means constant employment for from one to three or four months, according to the character of the country wherein the new town is being founded. Obviously, it does not take so long to plot out a stretch of level, treeless prairie as it does to map out a tract of undulating land covered with dense scrub.

The surveying of Crown lands, whether already in occupation under the pre-emption law or not, produces an abundance of work for the surveyor. Crown lands are territory which has not been acquired by purchase or occupation, and, as the name implies, belongs to the Nation. In the Dominion of Canada these lands are either sold outright, leased, or are reserved for homesteading or pre-emption. Their extent is tremendous, and many millions of acres still remain to be mapped out, so that the task of surveying is certain to occupy many years to come.

The land is divided off into what are known as sections, each of which is equivalent to a square mile, or 640 acres, and is sold or homesteaded in units of quarter-sections of 160 acres. Each holding is of square shape, with the boundary-lines running true north and south by due east and west. The cost of surveying varies according to the situation of the land and its accessibility. It may be 1s. per acre in a territory adjacent to inexpensive means of travel and living; on the other hand, it may run up to 2s. or more per acre in the remote districts. For the most part the Crown Lands which are under development

have been surveyed—certainly those stretches which are contiguous to the railways. Yet, as the pioneers, by wandering farther and farther afield, are discovering new and little-known tracts of excellent arable country in the most out-of-the-way corners of the Dominion, survey work necessarily must follow occupation by the settlers. In other words, the settler stakes his holding, and commences development before his boundaries are defined. At the same time, however, he is compelled to have his holding surveyed within a certain period, and has to defray the cost thereof himself, unless in the meantime the Government completes the task, and assesses his proportion of the cost.

The Government carries out the survey operations for the most part, as obviously it would be an unremunerative task for a surveyor to proceed 200 or 300 miles up-country by prehistoric means of travel merely to survey, say, a handful of 640 acres for four settlers, while the expense of the operation might hit the latter with undue heaviness. Consequently, large tracts are taken in hand at a time, of sufficient area to render the task financially attractive to the surveying corps. A fee of, say, 2s. per acre appears ridiculously inadequate when applied to a small holding, but when it is considered in connection with several thousand acres it represents a promising contract. The Government, as a rule, entrust such work to private enterprise, concluding a contract price per acre for the job.

The Crown or Dominion Lands are divided up into what are known as quadrilateral townships, so far as the configuration of the country permits, each containing thirty-six sections of one square mile each, the boundaries thus being six miles in length on either side. The surveying operations having been let to a contractor, as it were, the latter has to complete his own terms with his survey engineers, and has to equip and fit out the ex-

peditions, as well as providing the means of travelling and provisioning.

Private enterprises which purchase large tracts of Canadian freehold beyond the surveyed districts have to perform this essential requisition themselves. Inasmuch as many of these private purchases extend over 150,000 acres in a single transaction, the survey contract becomes an attractive proposition. There was one purchase of some 125,000 acres in a remote part of the north country, where the agreed price for surveying amounted to 2s. 6d. per acre. A young engineer who had familiarized himself with this work upon one of the new railways, and who had saved about £200, tendered for the job, and was successful. Then he realized that his small capital was totally inadequate to finance the enterprise, but he was able to persuade his principals to deposit a certain sum in advance in his bank to meet contingencies. The work netted him a gross sum of £15,000 in round numbers, and by a stroke of luck, while he was engaged upon this task, he succeeded in obtaining another contract to complete a further 100,000 acres in the same part of the country at the same figure. By the time he had completed the two contracts he had swelled his banking account by several thousand pounds. To-day he is firmly entrenched in the country, and is entrusted with several big survey undertakings.

Surveying will afford the young engineer glimpses of the country which are otherwise impossible. To-day he may be at work among the settled areas abutting the International boundary; a few months later he is wrestling with the crags and deep valleys of the Yukon; later he is found tramping the undulating wastes fringing the southern shores of Hudson Bay with his transit and level. It offers one of the most impressionistic means of becoming familiarized with the vast Dominion and its kaleidoscopic physical variations and climate.

CHAPTER XVIII

OPENINGS FOR THE PROFESSIONS

ARE the professions overcrowded ? This is a favourite theme for discussion in these islands, ranking almost in popularity with the eternal question, "What shall we do with our boys ?" Undoubtedly here many professional occupations are overcrowded, and yet the colleges and training-schools continue to pour out ever-increasing streams to flood the overburdened market, rendering the struggle for existence keener and keener.

It would be a good thing, both for the professions and the welfare of the Dominion, if this current could be diverted, so as to supply it with the surplus volume at any rate. Canada maintains a number of excellent training-schools and colleges, it is true, but the amazing rapidity with which the country is developing and becoming populated is quite outdistancing the yield of these establishments. Another factor is responsible for the dearth of professional men in the Far West. Upon emergence into the world of business the more energetic recognize that some time must elapse in building up a remunerative practice. They have little or no inclination to leave the busy cities, and they see that commerce is more promising than the special field in which they have been trained. Accordingly, one sees doctors, surgeons, dentists, and other professional men forsaking their first love for those spheres in which there is a more sporting chance of getting rich quickly, because, after

all, the amassing of dollars is the guiding star of every Canadian's existence, and the shorter the period in which this end may be consummated the better. On the other hand, the wheels of fortune grind slowly towards the position of a millionaire in professional pursuits.

If one were to take a census of the number of doctors practising among the new towns in the West, the resultant figures would be startling. Seeing that new communities are being established on the average of one per day, and that the number of persons settling down in each spot ranges from 100 upwards, it will be realized that at least 300 chances for a doctor to make good are presented every year. Yet probably less than 50 per cent. of these opportunities are taken up.

The prospect of settling down among 100 people and building up a flourishing practice certainly does not appear very rosy. But then it must be remembered that the town is only a pivot around which turns a vast area of surrounding country, possibly of twenty or thirty miles radius and rapidly becoming settled. Taking the average of one family to every 160 acres or quarter-section, it will be seen that a township—not a town, but the quadrilateral area into which the country is divided by the survey—when fully settled, may be taken to be populated by 144 families. Assuming the average family to number six souls, this gives a total of 864 people, which, added to the population of the town, may easily represent 1,000 people, at a modest computation, available for a doctor's ministrations. Then it must be borne in mind that the country is not standing still, so that the medico's practice is increasing every year.

In the Far West the call for medical attention is very acute, and the doctor who establishes himself in a community in its earliest days has a very attractive chance. In the moulding stages accidents are very frequent, and

it must be admitted that the way in which the pioneers by force of circumstances controvert fatalities from the most serious mishaps is astonishing. Here and there a doctor may be found entrenched, and in every instance I have found that the physician was contented with his lot, that his practice was steadily and surely improving with every succeeding year, accompanied by a coincident improvement in his financial status. But one must be in on the ground-floor, to be firmly established by the time the town takes up its position in the world's affairs.

When I arrived at Fort George, the town was bustling along as busily as some 300 souls could make it by toiling for nearly sixteen hours a day. Minor accidents were of frequent occurrence, and yet there was not a doctor within 200 miles. One could not buy a box of ointment, pills, a bottle of liniment or carbolic—in fact, no therapeutics whatever within double that distance. There was not a pharmacy in the place, though one was being built, and none of the shops stocked drugs or other medicaments of any description.

On all sides there were evidences that a doctor was in urgent request. One man had tried conclusions with an axe against his leg, and had suffered severely in the ordeal. Another had had a tumble while running up a shack, and had given his shoulder a nasty jolt. A third had strained his back badly while carrying a heavy load, and so on. Yet one and all pulled through somehow or other, thanks to the rough treatment of their unskilled comrades and a slice of luck, but professional attention would have brought restoration to health in a third of the time, and with far less excruciating agony.

There were two cases in particular which demanded expert attention. One of the engineering staff on a steamboat which ran between the town and Soda Creek had been jammed among the machinery, and his thigh

had been badly bruised. He took very little notice of the mishap, and continued to hobble about, giving the affected part frequent massage with engine oil to secure some relief. But he got worse, and at last was unable to move. The affected part had swollen, and the pain was racking the man to pieces. His companions were baffled ; they had never encountered such an accident before. The man was laid up as comfortably as possible under the circumstances. Then the patient worried his "pards" still further by becoming delirious. They desired to remove him to Soda Creek by the next steamboat, but it was felt that he would never last the journey.

As luck would have it, there was a Harvard student in the town. He had taken his American degrees in medicine, but had never practised, being one of those who had decided to take the chances of commerce in preference to professional duties. His assistance was enlisted. Legally, he was debarred from practising, as he had not obtained the requisite qualifications in the Dominion, but he decided to extend what aid he could. Diagnosis served to convince him readily that mortification had set in, and was so far advanced that the chances of the patient's recovery were very slender. The situation was desperate. The doctor was quite unequipped for the treatment that was necessary ; he could not obtain a single requisition in the town. However, he set to work. His penknife, razor, a grindstone, and ample supplies of boiling water, with strips of rag of all sorts and conditions obtained from odd corners, were pressed into service, the mortified part was cut away, and the bad blood drawn off. It was a crude operation, and septic poisoning was quite anticipated by the doctor. He did not fail to realize the serious condition of the patient and his own position. He never left the

sufferer for more than half an hour during the succeeding three days, bathing, bandaging, and nursing him most sedulously. In his work he was assisted by the steel-like constitution of the sufferer, and a week's careful attention sufficed to relieve him to such an extent that he was able to be carried down the river to Quesnel, where he was handed over to qualified skilled attention. The surgical treatment meted out, though essentially primitive, served to save the man's life, but the Harvard graduate admitted to me that it was the toughest and most anxious week that he ever had experienced, bearing in mind his own peculiar predicament.

Scarcely had he tended this critical case, when he was run to earth by another fellow-townsmen, whose wife had had the misfortune to pierce her ear with a hat-pin, the point of which had broken off and was buried in the wound. She was prostrated with pain. The graduate hurried off to the patient. Denied all surgical instruments and other facilities, he did the best he could for the woman under the circumstances, bathing the wound with boiling water, and endeavouring to probe it with his sterilized pocket-knife. He patched up the patient sufficiently to enable her to travel down the river on the morrow, but fortunately the incoming boat had a doctor on board who was travelling up-country, partly on pleasure bent, but principally to investigate a tract of land which he had purchased. As he had a small emergency outfit with him, he was able to alleviate the sufferer sufficiently to render the tedious journey southwards unnecessary.

I have met several young physicians among these very new towns, and, although they confess that in the earliest days patients are somewhat few and far between, and one has to patrol a vast territory to keep things going, still the clock soon moves round sufficiently to improve the



SURVEYING.

Running a survey line through the bush. The axemen have cleared the narrow passage through the dense growth.

situation from the financial point of view. On the whole, the doctor's time is pretty well occupied, and he has to be prepared to embark upon some trying and arduous jaunts at a moment's notice. Turning out of bed in the middle of the night to answer a call from a point thirty or more miles away, with the thermometer well down below freezing, with a blizzard raging, and a yelping dog-train as the only vehicle of transport, does not seem alluring, but one soon gets accustomed to these conditions. Certainly the journey is well paid. On the average, the doctor receives 4s. a mile, both out and home, for the journey, on the top of which comes the fee for his attention to the patient. When the call is as many as eighty miles away, as was the case with one doctor I met, where the travelling fees alone represented a sum exceeding £30, medical attention may be considered to be an impossible luxury from the settler's point of view. Yet the average settler, by thrift and industry, soon succeeds in piling up a small nest-egg, and apparently does not begrudge a heavy payment to a doctor for attention to a sick member of his family.

A young physician, fresh from the medical college, who decides to try his luck under such conditions, and free from competitive interests, as a rule, can look forward to a commencing annual income of about £160. As the district grows and the surrounding country becomes more and more thickly populated, with an increasing ratio of illness, the doctor's income becomes automatically augmented, so that within a few years a comfortable £500 or £700 per annum may be anticipated. Such an income in the bush is equal to thrice this sum in the average city. The doctor is not called upon to maintain any social position. The average medical man in the Canadian West might easily be taken for an English farmer; there is very little difference externally. Ex-

penditure is practically nominal, because rent is cheap and taxes are low. There is the additional attraction of being able to improve the shining hour by astute investments in land. One doctor whom I met, who had spent ten years in a small frontier town, ministering to the ailments of four or five hundred scattered families, confessed that he had selected such a field for his activities as a vehicle for land-investment. Although his annual professional income was approaching the four figures, on more than one occasion he had made more than the equivalent of five years' medical work from a single land-deal. His own farm comprised a section for which, with its improvements, he had received many tempting offers.

But, apart from this side inducement a bush practice has greater far-reaching effects. It is probably the best field into which the young doctor raw from college can be pitched. He is thrown absolutely upon his own resources and skill, and the cases with which he comes into contact at times would make the head of a specialist feel inclined to split. But the bush doctor has no opportunity to call in a colleague for consultation. It is up to him to bring the patient through the ailment with which he is afflicted. The more teasing the case, the greater becomes his fame, if he succeeds in keeping the patient upon the right side of the "Great Divide"; while, even if he is cheated in his contest, and the sufferer slips through his fingers, despite the most careful and diligent attention, he does not suffer. On the other hand, the disciple of *Æsculapius* who is apt to be careless and indifferent, or fails to show the requisite degree of sympathetic interest in a case, meets his Waterloo at once, and is boycotted out of the limits of the community.

The accidents of the bush, as well as the maladies, are peculiar, and invariably serious. One man was handling the plough on the railway grade when something went

wrong, and before he realized what was the matter his thigh had been almost torn out. The wound was terrible, and the doctor admitted to me that he had never had a moment's immunity from anxiety until that man was out of the primitive hospital. Another case concerned a settler who, climbing over a dead tree which obstructed his path while clearing his land, slipped and fell upon a snag—the short, bayonet-like point of a dead branch. The limb penetrated his abdomen, and was about as bad an instance of snagging as one could wish to see, because, in addition to piercing the body, the stump, in the man's struggles, snapped off, leaving a good two inches of wood embedded in the wound. As the wood was dead and crumbled up under the investigating movements of the surgeon's probe, the removal of every trace of the foreign substance was a heart-breaking task, and for two or three weeks the patient hovered between life and death. But the unremitting attention of the physician prevented that remorseless enemy of surgery, septic poisoning, supervening, as well as other complications, and the settler was able to regain his shack.

The crude sanitary ideas adopted in the bush are liable to precipitate the whole gamut of complaints arising from lack of attention to hygiene. Typhoid fever is a scourge for which the physician ever is on the alert. Now and again this terrible disease will get a start, and is only prevented from exacting a heavy toll by indefatigable medical efforts. Occasionally the professional man himself is overwhelmed in his zeal by his relentless foe. One young doctor, with whom I spent a couple of days, and who was regarded as extremely clever and with a brilliant career before him, was carried off about a month after we parted by this malady, in his untiring attempt to save the community among whom he was living from being ravaged by an outbreak of this virulent scourge.

Another malady breaks out with fearful virulence in the late autumn. For the most part, it is confined to the army of mineral prospectors. When they straggle into the frontier town after weeks of laborious scratching upon the mountain slopes and among the tumbling creeks, they invariably celebrate the event by hugging the bar of the saloon, enjoying a "cracker-jack of a bust-up," and completing the orgy by becoming prostrated from the effects of excessive indulgence in alcohol. Then the doctor gets busy for a few days holding the maniacal patients in check.

The wilderness is full of surprises, and one of the most startling of these is the magnificent hospital at Hazelton. To-day, owing to the railway having invaded the country, this establishment does not appear so remarkable, but five years ago it was certainly an odd link between civilization and the unknown, because the nearest city, Vancouver, was about 700 miles away. The building is in an idyllic situation, on a flat tableland under the shadow of the precipitous flanks of Boulé Mountain. It is a full-fledged institution, able to tend the sufferings of anyone and any description of case. It was founded and is maintained by a Mission, in collaboration with other organizations of a similar character and private enterprise, while it serves the ends of both the white and red population indiscriminately.

Another professional man who is becoming more and more in demand is the veterinary surgeon. Cattle are indispensable to the settler, and, although he tends them with every care, accidents will happen, and mysterious diseases which baffle the owner will break out. Seeing that the stock is valuable for the most part, it is not surprising to learn that the settler is quite as ready to pay heavily for attention to his charges as to members of his family, when stricken down with illness.

The openings for veterinary surgery will become greater and greater as diversified farming becomes practised upon a more extensive scale than is the case at present. Although on the prairies animal traction is being superseded by mechanical power, still, there are vast stretches of country now being developed where the motor vehicle will experience an uphill fight for supremacy, owing to the adverse physical conditions of the country. Sheep-farming is coming more into vogue, while swine and cattle are occupying more and more attention in the West owing to the heavy and increasing demand for dairy products, and supplies of raw material for the canning factories.

The veterinary surgeon, like his colleague the medical practitioner, must be prepared to wander far and wide in support of his practice. In summer two or three sturdy horses are an excellent investment, and provide the only means of travel—one as saddle-horse, and the other, possibly, carrying a small equipment for the professional man over a night and day or two in the bush. Fees are on a liberal scale, while travelling expenses are assessed from custom, upon a similar and highly satisfactory basis.

As the new towns develop and emerge from the timber-shack chrysalis stage into the permanent masonry form, the numerous handmaids of civilization in the form of telephones, electric light and power, and tramways, inevitably follow, for the Western Canadian town is nothing if not up-to-date. Such developments offer opportunities to the electrical engineer, as well as being a mine of valuable experience, while other branches of civil engineering offer tempting chances to the right men for the jobs. Petrol and steam traction is yet in its infancy, but the outlook is particularly healthy for these professional pursuits in the near future, and mechanical engineers expert in these respective branches of their craft can make good under the most promising conditions.

The young man just out of his apprenticeship is the most in demand, and the British engineer, from the varied and thorough character of his training, which invariably includes a period of hard gruelling in the practical shop, is preferred to the product of the American technical institution, which has proved sadly wanting during the past few years. It has been found that there is a vast difference between the laboratory, with all its complete plant, and textbook guidance of what to do if such-and-such happens, and the open field, where a man is thrown upon his own resources and ingenuity to extricate himself from tight corners and teasing problems ; where things never go as they ought to according to the textbook. The European school has proved its superiority, and that is the reason why to-day the man from the prosaic Old World picks up the plums of his profession.

What makes appeal to the British engineer is that he is able to give evidence in a tangible form that confidence in his skill and judgment is not misplaced. He is not tied hand and foot by conventionality : individuality is given free rein. If the effort pans out well, it meets with its own reward. If the experiment turns out a failure—well, the young man had better take the next train out, and put as many miles between himself and the locality where he has come a cropper in as short a period as he can.

CHAPTER XIX

LUMBERING, LOGGING, AND TIMBER-CRUIISING

WINTER is dreaded by the agricultural labourer struggling hard throughout the greater part of the twenty-four hours for £3 or £4 a month, because then, on the prairie particularly, unemployment becomes bitterly acute. The majority of the farmers, both native and those who have trekked across the border from the United States, close their farms after the harvest is garnered. With the golden coin, or rather sheafs of crisp notes which have been exchanged for the grains of corn, they hie off to the Sunny South, where the rimy handshake of King Winter is unknown, to while away the months in idleness and ease, until the spring arrives to enable them to reappear upon their Canadian property.

When the wealthy farmer goes off on pleasure bent, the farm-hand has a mighty poor lookout. He is left to wear the soles from his shoes looking for work. Little wonder that grain-growing is not regarded altogether as a blessing, and any agricultural labourer who turns his feet westwards in the search for work would do well to ignore the huge wheatfields, and to throw in his lot upon farms where mixed farming is practised. There he is certain to find employment the whole year round, as the stock must be tended.

Still, if he is forced to tramp, he need not waste very much shoe-leather in seeking for a job, provided he is robust, active, and energetic. In the winter, when nearly

every other outdoor occupation is driven into a condition of hibernation, the lumber-camp gets busy. The trees are ripe for felling and conversion into the thousand and one requirements of commerce. Logging is to the Canadian winter what cereal-raising is to the Canadian summer—the staple industry, the life-blood of existence. If there were no logging industry to keep the drifting shoals of unskilled labour above water-level, the much-vaunted grain wealth of the great West would become hypothetical, and an academic subject of discussion. Logging flourishes actively from the wintry, ice-girt shores of the Atlantic to the warm chinook-swept coasts of the Pacific, and from end to end the life is much the same—rough, ready, and to the point.

Down Quebec way the French Canadian, so picturesquely described in the poems of Professor Drummond, holds undisputed sway. He is an uncouth individual, though hospitable, in all conscience, but his boots are shod with vicious spikes, with which he is ever ready to try conclusions against the soft flesh of another's face when provoked to hostility, and he requires but very little rousing. He is an adept at *la savate*, and fisticuffs against murderous spikes embedded in half an inch of leather, carried at the free end of a muscular leg as flexible and as strong as a steel spring, are unequal odds. In the Middle West the lumber-man of experience is generally a burly bully, and a sorry specimen of his genus at that, capable of being brought rudely to his senses by a stiff upper-cut from the tenderfoot's fists. In the Far West he is a more tractable individual, even though he does regard the revolver as an efficient instrument of argument at times. Lawlessness, however, has been suppressed almost entirely through the unremitting vigilance and energy of the authorities.

The lumber-man is probably the roughest and most

uncouth specimen of humanity gracing this earth. He is taciturn to the degree of moroseness. His life and labour tend to foster these characteristics. Buried in the snow-bound wilderness, swinging an axe from morning to night, throwing trunks of trees about as if they were matches, and fighting the ever-dropping thermometer, is not kid-glove work. It saps every trace of politeness from the most cultured frame, giving birth to a new and strange code of etiquette, which the wilds alone know and recognize.

Lumbering and logging are the two most despised occupations in the whole of the Dominion. Why? No one can say, except that it is manual effort in its most emphasized form. True, an unsavoury reputation has always lingered about the logging camp, and this has filtered far and wide, so that the livelihood is brought within the limits of opprobrium. Yet swinging an axe from snowy morn to freezing eve, bringing down giants of the forests at £8 a month, is not to be declined when the stomach is faced with emptiness. With food of the most strengthening qualities, although limited in variety, building up bone and sinew, this wintry livelihood is not to be despised. The average farm-hand, when thrown upon his own resources at the end of the harvest, is wise if he turns his footsteps towards the lumber-camp. He will earn the same wage during the cold half of the year as he can command during the moiety when the heat is intense, and the timber Avernus is preferable to starvation. Maybe he will enter a firm which considers the contract system preferable, and then he will earn just as much as his muscle will feel disposed to bring him: the more he can do, the more he will earn.

In the lumber-camp physical strength and endurance are at a premium, and a goodly stock of these attributes is certain to spell financial satisfaction by the time the

snow commences to melt. True, the knocks are hard and frequent, but they only serve to strengthen the constitution and harden the spirit more and more. The tenderfoot who strikes a lumber-camp in the anticipation of discovering feather-bed conditions will be disillusioned very speedily, for he will pitch into a strange world and be buffeted considerably. But with an equable temper, accommodating manners, and a *bon esprit*, he will score, for he will learn to laugh at the roughness of his companions, and, with the display of a little diplomacy and resource, will inevitably develop into a favourite among favourites.

There was one young English fellow whom I can recall. He tumbled into Canada, as so many have done before him, and will continue to arrive, until "House full" is signalled far and wide. His pocket was as empty as his stomach. Looking for work, his feet drew him to the lumber-camp, where he settled down to a dreary round of toil. His national obstinacy soon brought him to loggerheads with his French-Canadian colleagues. Words led to blows, and one burly wielder of the axe let out with his steel-armoured foot and the energy latent in the elastic muscles of the giant's legs. The kick in the stomach punched the wind out of the English boy as easily as an air-balloon collapses under a pin-prick, and the jar of the steel spikes against his face just as quickly brought it back again. Instinctively he let out with his left, which pulled up against the hardened jawbone of his antagonist. Five split knuckles bore testimony to the impact, and a swift following of the right, with a similar result, brought about the outstretching of six foot of French-Canadian on Mother Earth. The discomfited lumber-jack pulled himself to a sitting posture, more in wonder than in rage, and when he regained his feet he was knocked down again just as unceremoniously. Three

times he bumped his head on the ground, and then, pulling himself to his feet, he buried the young Britisher's hand in the five ramrod digits forming the French-Canadian's human vice, and shook his opponent's arm as vigorously as if it were an axe-handle. Ever after those two were fast friends. They felled trees together, piled up sleds in company, and accumulated dollar-bills in concert. The native had been at the game since his earliest days, and what he could not teach his new pupil about logging was not worth knowing. He imparted his knowledge to his new friend with the utmost frankness, and when the latter, by sheer force of merit, was shifted a few rungs up the ladder of success, he took care that his quondam antagonist was not forgotten. It must not be inferred from this that an accomplished knowledge of the noble art is a certain lever to success, but the story is narrated for the mere purpose of showing that it is adaptability to circumstances which is the governing factor in the lumber-camp.

It must not be thought that the lumber-camp is a hot-bed of individualism run riot. It is a little world where the survival of the fittest is carried to its bitterest conclusion. Yet at the same time the experience is one which has often been the means of building up the strength, vim, and self-reliance of one who has run to seed.

While the work of the lumber-jack may be described as uneventful, and to a certain measure unskilled, this is only true so far as timber-felling is concerned. When it comes to despatching the logs down the river, the difficulties of the task commence in real earnest, and no little art is demanded to circumvent the many and peculiar pitfalls that lurk on every hand. At places the stream is so shallow that there is insufficient water to float the logs. To overcome this drawback the lumber-man turns engineer. He builds a dam, the opening in which is fitted

with a stop-block, so that the height of the water in the lake formed by the timber barrage may be regulated according to requirements. The log-lift is a very primitive arrangement, and is handled by two men with levers. These fit into holes in the log, and the men roll alternately, a chain being fastened inside the bearing at either end, hooks being on the end of the chains, which catch on iron pins halfway down in a mortise in the stop-log. When a timber-drive has to be made, all the stop-logs are lifted, allowing the water to rush through the opening, bearing on its bosom a jumble of timber. In this way the shallow stream is given sufficient water to bear the timber down.

Thrilling, exciting stories without end may be related of the adventures encountered in driving the timber down. More than one man, although expert at his work, has been nonplussed for a moment, to be thrown adrift into the raging waters to dodge the ugly ends of the swirling logs ; and more than one has been brained in the process, to sink beneath the foam to rise no more. Broken limbs and fractures at least are the positive rewards for carelessness, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the men keep these penalties in view.

While logging may be considered the bottom rung of the timber industry, if a man sticks to it and displays any acumen he can ascend to bigger things just as easily as smoke will rise upward. His acquaintance with the various trees in the felling operations familiarizes him with the different woods, so that he is able to tell at a glance the dimensions, texture, and species of a tree. The mastery of these details leads to him being able to size up a standing forest as to its quality of timber, probable yield, and character, as easily as a stock-raiser can guess the weight of a hog. In a word, he becomes able to convert so many square miles of standing timber into its



WHERE THE TIMBER COMES DOWN.

A lumber dam on a back river, built to provide sufficient depth of water to carry the logs through when the drive is made. The lumber jacks are enjoying a little welcome relaxation with the trout, which abound in these streams.

equivalent of pounds, shillings, and pence in the form of lumber : he is fitted to become a timber-cruiser.

Timber-cruising is the highest rung of the lumbering industry. It means that the expert must be a bush-ranger, but that matters little so long as the end is justified. The timber-cruiser's life is without a parallel, unless one places him in comparison with the prospector. The latter turns over the rocky ground for monetary value in mineral ; the former casts his eyes over the sea of swaying green to estimate how much it is worth as boards, joists, and other commercial forms of wood.

The timber-cruiser's life, taken on the whole, is full of adventure and thrills. He sallies off into the heart of a new country, seeking for fresh forests which may be depleted to satiate the rapacious hunger of the saws in the lumber-mills, inspects the standing trees, reports upon their soundness, suitability for certain purposes, character of the wood, stakes out the claims, and sets forth how such wealth may be felled and brought down to the saw-mills with the minimum of expense.

I was ploughing my way through a lonely corner of Western Ontario when one evening there was a "halloo," and a violent smashing through the scrub. Looking up, I descried a gaunt, unkempt figure, rifle in hand, his clothes torn to tatters, and a matted growth of tangled hair struggling over his face. Across his back was thrown a blanket, which had suffered severely from contact with thorns in the scrubs. He was a timber-cruiser, making his way back towards civilization. He had been on a tramp through 200 miles of wild, comparatively unknown forest in this province, where there were no trails, and where water in the form of rushing river, deep lake, or ugly muskeg was more common than dry land. He had been out for several weeks unaccompanied, and, truth to relate, no one knew whether he was alive or dead. He

had been searching for fresh supplies for the sawmills of his firm, and had wandered into as rough a corner of the country as could be imagined on his quest. He had had to depend upon the game in the forests and the fish in the rivers for sustenance over the greater part of the journey, securing a little welcome variety when he struck a settler's homestead or a prospector's camp, which was seldom. He had waded up to his waist through viscous slime, had swum wickered rivers and creeks, and had made exasperating detours to round wide lakes, or had built crude rafts to carry him from shore to shore. His sole guide had been his compass. When he struck the fringe of the country he had decided to pick up the railway about 200 miles south, had selected his bearings, and had pushed ahead, keeping his eyes wide open to take stock of the timber thriving on all sides. He had not spoken to a soul for nearly a month when he tumbled into our camp, and his delight at being able to snatch some conversation with a fellow white man may be better imagined than described.

Throughout the remote West and North-West the timber-cruiser is particularly active at the present moment. The depletion of the known reserves of timber, and the increasing demand for this commodity, especially for the manufacture of paper, has drawn attention to the wilder and lesser known parts of the Dominion, where the forests are known to be interminable, and hoarding vast supplies of the most valuable woods of commerce. In the Upper Fraser River valley, which as yet is wellnigh inaccessible, but which is being penetrated by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, the groves of the most stately and valuable trees rise in unbroken seas from the banks of the waterways to the heights of the mountains. On every hand, however, I saw evidences of the timber-cruiser's activity. Here and there on the steep mountain flank the prevailing

expanse of deep green tone was splashed by a white mark, where a tree had been felled, to bare a whitened stump indicating a timber limit that had been claimed and possibly granted.

The cruiser in such difficult country as this may make money rapidly. He may either proceed out on his journey of discovery at a daily wage, varying according to his ability from 20s. or more upwards ; or he may arrange to scour the country for a round sum, anticipating that the task will occupy so many weeks. In the former case the incidental expenses, such as the commissariat, the chartering of canoes and Indian guides will be defrayed by those commissioning the enterprise, leaving the sum paid to the timber-cruiser as a wage free from all deduction, except for what private necessities the bushranger may fancy. In the second instance the cruiser will have to defray all such expenditure from the lump sum allocated to him for the contract, and he generally contrives to pare it down to the irreducible minimum, so that as wide a margin may be left to himself as possible in the form of profit. A bulky pocket-book is generally the only business impedimenta with which the bushranger saddles himself, in which he makes copious field notes setting forth the precise character of the timber investigated, its estimated yield per acre, and other details which may be required. He will take stock of the proximity of the reserves to a convenient means of getting the logs from the forest to the site for a sawmill, selecting an advantageous and strategical situation for water-driving. If he stakes an area of good timber, he marks it off, roughly pacing distances, and indicating the length and breadth of the claim upon a decapitated tree-trunk, in much the same manner as the settler selects and stakes his virgin land.

At times the task is not to be lightly undertaken, and demands a man of infinite resource and a robust constitu-

tion, who is not very easily lost in the trackless wilds, and who, if he should get marooned in the ocean of timber, does not lose his head, but can easily pick up his bearings and find his way out again. The French-Canadian is a born timber-cruiser; the forest is his home. There was one of these bushrangers who had trekked to the extreme West. I met him in the mining country fringing the Canadian Pacific Railway. He could nose timber as easily as a cat can scent mice. He had achieved a remarkable reputation for miles around, and was in keen demand as being a son of the bush. There was never any apprehension that he would come back from an expedition without very tangible fruits.

One firm suddenly found themselves in dire need of further supplies of the raw material. In the vicinity it was unobtainable. There was no alternative but to delve into the forests farther afield. This cruiser was rounded up and the situation explained. Haste was every consideration. When the principals had described their requirements they asked the French-Canadian when he could start out.

"Right now," was the retort. "Give me a couple of men, and if you can fit me up with provisions—well, all the better."

"How long will you be about it?"

"I'll be back in six weeks."

"A thousand dollars if you are," replied the principals, "and at the same time let us know the best way to handle the lumber."

Two hours later the cruiser, with a couple of companions and a good stock of provisions, pulled out of that township. The six weeks were almost up, and the principals were worrying somewhat as to how things had progressed, as they were nearing a tight corner commercially, when one afternoon in strode the cruiser. He was con-

siderably battered and dishevelled. He had been having the toughest six weeks of his life, he stated, and if his appearance was any criterion, he certainly was not understating the case. He had been struggling among the rocky slopes of the Selkirks, and had succeeded beyond his own anticipations. He would have been back a fortnight earlier, only he had been troubled by bush fires which hindered his movements very appreciably. He dumped his rough notes of the quality and character of the timber upon the table, together with a crude though full statement of his suggestions for the sawmills. A steam plant was required. As he had fulfilled his mission and was back on time, he was handed the thousand dollars, which he pocketed with the intimation that he "was going down to the hotel to get a drink, a square meal, and a turn-in for a few hours to get some welcome sleep."

He was aroused from his slumbers the next morning early. The principals had considered his notes, with his report, and wanted to see him immediately. He dressed hurriedly, and was soon back in the office again. They were going to act upon his instructions, would build a steam plant, but would he supervise its erection and start it running? The cruiser was agreeable, on terms. The firm undertook to ship all the material to the point as convenient to the timber limit as possible, leaving him to contrive its removal therefrom to the point of erection. They grasped the fact that the latter part of the work was the most exacting, but they could not brook the slightest delay. Again came the query, "How long will it take you?"

"If weather holds up, I'll have it started in a month from to-day."

"Another thousand dollars if you do, and, what's more, we'll give you a hundred dollars for every day you can clip off that month. Never mind about expense; we'll

attend to that. We want this mill started, and we have got to get a move on."

Off went the cruiser once more. He left instructions as to where and how to ship the requisite machinery, and with a gang of men he had soon regained the forest, and was cleaving a way through the scrub for the passage of the bulky boiler and other cumbersome portions of the plant. He was bent upon that thousand dollars, and as much premium as he could squeeze in, so he urged his chums with good wages and an enticing bonus to let themselves go. They went at it day and night. Getting up the boiler and one or two other details were exciting and exasperating, but three weeks from the day the cruiser left the office for the second time the ripping and buzzing of the circular saw was heard. He had got his thousand dollars, and something like an additional seven hundred dollars into the bargain.

It seems a wild manner in which to do business, since that timber plant cost the round sum of £2,000 by the time it was set going, of which the cruiser had pocketed a comfortable £500 odd in the space of three months. But it paid the firm hand over fist. The lumber commanded from £7 to £10 per thousand lineal feet, and the mill, though turning out a rough 25,000 feet every day, could not keep pace with the demand. True, these prices only lasted for a short while, but in that brief period the owners recouped their initial outlay comfortably two or three times over.

Many of the lumber magnates of Canada have sprung from the humble lumber-jack. They gained sufficient knowledge to enable them to start out as cruisers, and they promptly went into the wilds and laid hands upon the finest stretches of timber they could discover, filed their claims, and either went off at once to dispose of their acquisitions at a good price, or sat down and waited for

the day when prices would rise to flood level. There is one stretch of first-class big timber standing on the Pacific coast to-day. It was roped in by a long-headed timber-cruiser two or three decades ago. He determined to hold on to it, and refused the most tempting overtures for its purchase from the lumber princes. It is standing unsold to this day, its value still appreciating by leaps and bounds every year. It is difficult to say offhand what that holding is worth, but it runs well into five figures.

The enterprising timber-cruiser, although his operations are limited by more stringent legislation, inasmuch as Canada has at last realized the significance of its timber wealth, and is guarding its reserves with a more eagle eye than formerly, has just as brilliant opportunities as were available twenty-five years ago. There are certain woods for which almost a fanciful demand prevails. Take cedar, for instance. The extent of known and available stretches of this wood on the American continent at the moment would not be sufficient, if bunched together, to make a respectable forest fire. This dearth has hit the manufacturers of lead-pencils hard. When the early inroads were made upon the cedar groves, the wood was cut in the most wasteful manner. Now the industry would pay twice or thrice as much as they gave for the primest wood when they first set to work. The stumps which were left to rot are now being torn up, and every square inch of good wood is being carefully cut out. In Eastern Canada, when the pioneer settlers appeared on the scene, and set to work to clear the land, the disrupted cedars were used to fashion saddle fences. To-day the fences are being torn down, the cedar fetching fancy prices, and other cheaper woods, such as jack-pine, are being made to do duty for boundary purposes. On the Pacific seaboard, the discovery of extensive stretches of hard woods

will enable the furniture-manufacturing industry to be set upon a firm footing in Vancouver and other west coast cities. At the moment such an industry cannot get a start, as there is no hard wood available for the industry, except at prohibitive prices. The western coast has a heavy rainfall, which is inimicable to the growth of hard woods ; one and all are soft and practically useless, except for timber-frame buildings, pulp-wood, and the most common commercial uses.

Timber-cruising is not without its meed of excitement and adventure. The forest fire is the greatest terror, and the bushranger is perforcedly exposed to its perils, as he is compelled to penetrate the bush in his occupation. One cruiser cherishes vivid memories of a narrow escape from being roasted to death. It was way up in the mountains, and he had struck a fine patch of healthy big timber. He was sitting down one evening in his small A-tent writing his notes, when a couple of Indians scuttled up. They were highly excited, and on the run, as he could see. A fierce forest fire was raging and driving their way. The timber-cruiser had observed the overhanging cloud of blue smoke wreathing and combing about the crags of the mountains, but had concluded that the actual scene of the conflagration was miles and miles away. The Indians estimated that the line of fire was from ten to twelve miles in length. They hurried on, and the cruiser, casting his eyes skywards and noting that there was very little wind—what breeze there was had half an inclination to swing round to blow the fire in the opposite direction and away from him—concluded that he was safe enough for a time. He turned into bed early, although he gave a somewhat anxious long look at the ruddy glow overhead, and listened intently to the distant music of the flames.

In the night he woke with a start. The wind was blow-

ing half a gale, and he could hear the rising and falling roaring like rumbling artillery. He knew the meaning of that sound only too well. He jumped out of his tent, and, to his astonishment, the very heavens themselves appeared to be on fire. The flames were on him. In a glance he took in the situation. There was only one avenue for escape, for the fire was in a semicircle round him. Without a moment's hesitation, he grabbed his rifle and started off on the run, discarding everything—even his precious notebook—as he saw that his prospective timber limit was doomed. It was a mad headlong flight for about two miles to the shores of a small lake nestling in the depression of the mountains. He could feel the scorching lick of the fire, and saw the angry tongues darting hither and thither high above his head amid a shower of sparks, as if a gigantic pyrotechnic display were in progress. He gained the edge of the lake when the ruddy devouring ring was no more than a mile behind him, jumped into the water, and struck boldly out for a little islet. Gaining this refuge, he crept under a jack-pine, and watched the fury of the fire and the startled animals, who, driven by the implacable enemy, rushed pell-mell into the water and struck out for the opposite shore. He watched the spruce-trees blow up with trepidation, and saw the blast created by the raging flames snap off half trees and send them flying through the air, burning as fiercely as petroleum-soaked torches.

These huge firebrands rained into the lake on every side, the hissing as the flames kissed the water to be extinguished rivalling in volume the sputtering, cracking, and roar of the forest in the throes of hellish agony. He dreaded one of these torches dropping into his refuge, and setting it going to join in the general disaster. If one did plump into the vegetation on the islet, then he would have to make another hurried watery departure, as the trees and

bushes around him were being scorched as dry as tinder by the heat of the fire on the mainland, barely a quarter of a mile distant. For some six hours he sat there, cooped up under the sheltering tree, shielding his face from the scorching heat, and striving to breathe freely in a suffocating atmosphere. Then the fire, unable to proceed any farther than the water's edge, died out, leaving a smouldering, blackened countryside as far as the eye could see in that direction, and blotting out everything with a nauseating smoke. It was so hot that he ventured to state that the temperature of the water in the lake had "shot up twenty degrees." Leastways, it felt like it to him as he swam back once more to the scorched, charred shore, and picked his way delicately over the glowing ashes, dodging falling trees and jumping spurts of flame smouldering among the blotches of moss littering the ground. That fire damped his timber-cruising ardour that season. The castles he had been building in the air while writing his field notes were just as visionary as when he first struck the country.

Yet the timber-cruiser's life is not to be despised. It is one means of making money, and quickly, too, when the task is associated with a thick slice of luck.

CHAPTER XX

VARIOUS AND MISCELLANEOUS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

ALTHOUGH unskilled labour finds it just as difficult to get a start in Canada without capital as in any other country, except in certain spheres of activity, yet perseverance will enable one to carve out a good niche of comfort in the temple of progress, and to occupy a more or less prominent position in the world of affairs.

Take the hotels and restaurants, for instance. He who attends to the wants of those at the table in these islands is regarded as a servile menial, but in Canada he becomes a person of importance. He can look forward safely to a steady 4s. per day at least in wages, augmented by two, three, or more times that amount in tips, according to the standing of the establishment in which he secures an engagement. In addition, there are many other advantages which must not be overlooked. There are long intervals between times which the waiter is at liberty to occupy just as he pleases, and he is assured of a sound meal three times a day.

There was one waiter who ministered to my wants while I was staying at a certain hotel in Montreal. He had fallen into Canada in the same manner as many of his class—had worked his passage over as a steward on board a vessel to New York, had buffeted with the ups and downs of life in the United States for a while, and at last found himself on the northern side of the International

Boundary, with his face set towards the premier city of the Dominion. He found a job—the one he was then fulfilling—within an hour of his arrival, and was netting a comfortable guinea a day for seven days in the week, and with no deductions whatever, except for his own private rooms. In the periods when he was not serving meals he was running a real estate business which he had started, and he found waiting at table an excellent medium for furthering these auxiliary interests, as he secured introductions to clients who otherwise would not have passed his way. The real estate business had grown from a humble beginning to demand the services of two clerks. Of the dual occupation the latter business was decidedly the more remunerative, but he retained his position of waiter as a means to an end.

At another hotel there was a young waiter of smart appearance and good address. A magnate from the West patronized this hostelry during his fleeting visits to the city, and he became impressed with the diplomatic manner and methods of this waiter. One evening, after the magnate had discussed an excellent dinner, he tilted his chair and called the waiter.

“Do you intend to stick this game for long?”

“Well, until I can get something better!”

“And if you had the offer of something better, would you take it?”

“Sure!”

“Would you go West to-night?”

“Yep!”

“Well, come with me. I’ve got a job which I think will fit you out fine.”

An hour later the waiter, having discarded his apron and serviette, was westward bound as valet to the magnate. Being well educated and shrewd, although hitherto debarred from displaying his talents, as he had been

dangling at the free end of Fortune's string, he went ahead, and when his companions heard of him later he was acting as secretary to his former customer.

If the unskilled labourer, or the man who has never had the luck to be taught a trade, drops into the vortex of hustle in the Dominion, can stand the jostling with a tight hand upon his pocket, and can keep a clear head, it is purely his own fault if he does not get out of the well-worn rut into which he first tumbled. I spent a few nights with one man in his little shack. He recalled the days when he sold newspapers in the street. He climbed up a bit, but the city did not offer any promising chances to forge ahead. So, with the little bit of money he had got together, he made up his mind to go West. He did not exhaust his slender savings in railway-fares, but secured the job to look after a westward-bound carload of cattle. His fare and expenses were paid, while he received 6s. wages a day into the bargain. It was rough work feeding and watering the stock, and progress was slow, but he reached the new country at last. He struck a small town, and, seeing an empty shack, took it over at a nominal rent, and opened a small store or shop. The outlay on stock ran away with the whole of his capital, but as he was not hampered by competition, he pulled along very well, until finally he received a tempting offer for his business. He closed with it, moved farther West, and opened another store on the same lines. This he disposed of profitably in the same way. This starting and selling small businesses developed into his speciality. He always carefully reconnoitred his ground, and always took care to be in on the ground-floor, and every succeeding bargain had swelled his bank-book. When I met him he had settled down for a longer period than usual, because he had struck a very good spot, had got into the way of bartering profitably with the Indians, and

between straight selling and trading he was making money rapidly.

I ran across another shack standing back from the trail about twelve miles south-east of the Hudson Bay Trading Post at Fraser Lake. Within a mile was a straggling Indian village, while four miles beyond was a large Red Colony. The shop was stocked from floor to ceiling with articles of every conceivable description, most of it, by the way, firmly secured in position as a precaution against theft. It was by no means an inviting situation, because the railway was over 400 miles away. Every ounce of the goods had to be brought up by pack-horses at about 10d. per pound all round in summer, and on sleighs in winter at about 2d. per pound. Passers-by were few and far between, and yet on the average the owner was sending out £300 in value and coin per month! Where was his connection? The Indians almost exclusively. The Red Men had grown tired of dealing with the Hudson Bay Post, and when this rival appeared upon the scene and held out more liberal trading terms, had transferred their custom to him.

So far as the fur industry is concerned, the sway of the Honourable Adventurers trading to Hudson Bay is vanishing rapidly. On all sides they are meeting with spirited competition from small individual traders, who lure the trade away from the Indians by the offer of better terms. The small man has the advantage over the Company, because his expenses are lower, and accordingly it is not surprising to find one of these shacks at times housing £1,000 worth of furs of all kinds. Again, the Company is not regarded with favour by the average individual, either red or white. Both use the Trading Post when necessity compels, but not otherwise. An Indian will travel twenty miles on his cayouse to get 2d. or 3d. more on a pelt from an independent trader than the Company

will offer him, although his home may be within a stone's-throw of the Hudson Bay Post.

It must be admitted, however, that many of these independent men take long risks which the older rival declines to entertain, such as the traffic in illicit skins—*i.e.*, the furs of animals which are protected by law. One of these traders was going out of the country with a bulging dunnage sack or two thrown over his pack-horse. He was putting up at one of the "stopping-places" on the Cariboo Road, had dumped down his baggage in one corner, and was lounging round. But a dog roving about the place sniffed the bags, and set up a loud excited barking. The dog's cries aroused the interest of a fellow-being at the bush inn, who came up and asked the trader what he had in his bags. The latter retorted insolently, resenting the inquisitiveness of the stranger, and then started bluffing, when the latter revealed his identity as a game-warden. As the trader manifested no desire to comply with the official's request, the latter deftly seized one of the bags, and in the twinkling of an eye his suspicions were confirmed. Among other articles which rolled out on the ground were a number of beaver skins! The other bags were laden similarly.

The trader was caught with the goods. Explanations were useless. He had proscribed skins in his possession, and that was sufficient for the game-warden. The trader was handed over to the law, the skins were confiscated, and he himself was mulcted heavily in a fine. The smuggling of illegal pelts is practised extensively, and, despite the vigilance of the authorities, few of the offenders are caught.

The Adventurers labour under the delusion that the methods which they adopted when they first set foot in the North-West in the Middle Ages are sufficient for to-day. They held autocratic sway for so many centuries that, when they found their powers curbed, they declined to adapt

themselves to the new conditions. No Western Canadian has a word to say in favour of the Hudson Bay Company, and, so far as my own experiences are concerned, I think the natives are somewhat justified in their attitude. The Westerner would like to see the Company out of existence, and if the opportunity arose he would not shrink from confiscating every possession which the organization now holds, as the Company has been guilty of holding-up the country. The citizen maintains that "when the Company was top-dog, it did nothing for the good of Canada, and now that the positions are reversed why should the interests of the Company be studied?" It is an unanswerable argument, because, unhappily, evidences of the Company's braking policy are visible on every hand.

Fortunately, there is no need for drastic action on the part of the man in the street, or rather bush. That great leveller—competition—is performing peacefully what the average citizen in his exuberance would like to accomplish in one stroke. Boycotting and the active support of rivals is achieving the desired end just as effectively. A powerful rival—the eminent French firm of Revillon Frères—is forcing its way into the country on every side, and the star of the Hudson Bay Company is waning, so far as trading is concerned. This active competitor is opening posts where barter can be practised upon level terms on every hand, where the red, and the white, men are sure of a square deal. The time is not far distant when this firm will have woven a complete trading-post girdle around the Northern Hemisphere. Its outposts on the Canadian Pacific shore will be able to shake hands with those on the Pacific seaboard of Siberia.

The agents of this concern are very much alive, and many men who have gained experience in the bush seize the opportunity to enter the Revillon service. In many

instances they are getting a foothold under the very noses of their older rivals. There was one man who had hiked into the wild hinterland, and in a small tumbledown shack was doing big business in fur barter. He did not wait for the Indians to come his way, but waylaid them as they were on the trail to the Hudson Bay Posts. By specious talking and the offer of slightly better terms he filched the trade from the English trading company. I asked how he could dispose of his furs. He winked and muttered “Revillons’.” Many an innocent-looking trading shack, ostensibly the property of a private individual, I found to have some remote connection with the great French firm. It was the vent for the little trader’s wares, at all events.

The Indian is an excellent customer for the white man who treats him fairly. The day is gone when he was compelled to trade, willy-nilly, with “Hu-s’n Ba’,” as he calls it. The little man working on his own—everyone in the bush appears to adopt trading as instinctively as a duck takes to water—resorts to the most extraordinary methods in order to drive in his competitive wedge farther and farther, and he generally makes a very good thing out of the transaction. I encountered one novel example of such enterprise. This individual boasted no commercial training, but yet he had a certain amount of business instinct. He was mushing through the Indian country in Northern British Columbia in an aimless kind of way, keeping a sharp eye open to seize anything which might be turned to profit. He observed that the Indians were inordinately fond of sugar-stuffs. That gave him an idea. He tracked back to the nearest railway-station, and promptly ordered some 400 pounds of cheap, attractive-looking sweets. He stowed this consignment on the backs of two pack-horses, which he bought up cheaply, and harked back to the Indian country. He hung about the Red

Settlement, with a small A-tent as his home, and in less than a month the whole 400 pounds of sweets had changed hands for excellent furs. The sweets cost him about 3d. per pound, but the Indians paid for them in kind at the rate of about as many shillings. With his cargo of skins the peripatetic trader returned south, netted a snug little sum for his goods at a Revillon store, and repeated the tactics upon a larger scale with the increased capital at his command. When I struck him he had become established firmly in a little wooden shack which he had run up on the spot where he had first pitched his tent, with his nearest white neighbour about twenty miles away. He was doing a roaring trade. Although at this time sweets were not his sole vehicle for bartering with furs, as he had a good assortment of other necessities displayed in his shack, yet brightly coloured fondants and chunks of toffee were in more popular request than shirts or even flour. One might be disposed to conclude that seeking for a profit ranging from 600 to 1,000 per cent. was a kind of robbery, but similar tactics have been practised by the old Trading Company from its earliest days. To charge an Indian "two bits," or 1s., for a notebook and pencil which can be purchased anywhere in Britain for a humble penny is no worse than charging the same individual 3s. for sweets that cost less than 6d. per pound.

Skilled labour, especially in connection with certain trades, always commands a good market. The activity of building operations calls for masons, bricklayers, plumbers, painters, joiners, and decorators. This demand is likely to continue for some time to come, owing to the rapid growth of the cities, and the fact that many of the frontier towns are now in course of transition from wood to stone. Water-power is being developed very extensively, and this factor has an influence upon the many branches of the electrical industry. Mining is being ex-

tended upon every hand, especially in coal and such commercial metals as copper, silver, and lead. These latter industries, however, demand expert labour, and unless the new arrival is a Cousin Jack from Cornwall, or hies from South Wales, the North of England, Scottish, and other mining centres, he stands little or no chance of making headway. Wages fluctuate violently, rising and falling with the season of the year, and the locality. So far as building and the cognate trades are concerned, the demand is confined to the cities and the railways, the latter being in connection with permanent structures, such as bridges, stations, and buildings for the rolling stock.

I ran across one unusual display of enterprise, but one which has many opportunities in a new town. It was at Hazleton. There were about 200 or 300 settled population, I should imagine, and businesses and shops of all descriptions were flourishing in the streets. It was a frontier town in the fullest sense of the word, as there was not another community within 200 miles. Into this strange colony a young English lady had fallen. She was deft with the typewriter, one of which machines she had brought up with her. With this she was busy from morning to night. I do not think there was another typewriter in the place, and the rising firms, wishing to convey an impression that they were more imposing than a glimpse of their timber-frame offices would convey on sight, duly had their communications and reports for the outside world executed in accordance with the practice of the most up-to-date city offices, showing that, although they were marooned 200 miles in the bush, yet they were practising modern scientific business methods. This young lady occupied one corner of the solitary room of a business office, apparently in return for the execution of whatever typewriting the owners desired, and she was in keen demand among one and all throughout the town,

making, as it were, a round of the various establishments in the manner of the postman, or ready to answer a call from here, there, and everywhere. It was certainly one of the strangest methods I had witnessed of making good, and the experiment was evidently perfectly satisfactory to herself.

The blacksmith is another toiler who, taken on the whole, is in very keen demand. But he must be conversant with every branch of his craft. At one moment he will be required to shoe a horse, at another a damaged wheel will demand his expert assistance, at a third perhaps a hinge will have to be overhauled or made, or an agricultural implement put right—in fact, he will have to be ready and competent to carry out any working in iron, no matter how puzzling it may seem, that may be brought his way. In the frontier towns as a rule the blacksmith is not very much in evidence. The railways and other constructional works are quite ready to take on any son of Tubal Cain that may present himself for employment. Many of the settlers in the remote districts suffer from this deficiency, and it is by no means unusual to find the blacksmith in many districts touring the country within a certain distance of his home. Shoeing is the most urgent requirement, seeing that the horse is the popular beast of burden, and the settlers often are in a quandary when a horse has cast a shoe, and possibly the blacksmith is fifteen miles away! On one of our pack-trains one of the boys was expert at farrier work, and he carried out all the demands in this direction, the shoes being carried ready-made in a variety of sizes upon the true American standardization principle, and as a rule a horse could be reshod in about twenty minutes.

In seeking for employment in such a country as Canada, success is dependent vitally upon the character of the man, and his ability to determine the market where his

labour is likely to command its value. It is useless for a cotton-spinner to hang about the Crows' Nest Collieries for work, while a miner will wear the skin off his feet looking for a job in the vicinity of Winnipeg. But if the cotton-spinner will come east, and the miner will go Nova Scotia way, or west, then each will drop into his appointed groove.

The "waster" has a short life in Canada; he generally degenerates into a tramp. Similarly, the man who is prepared only to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay receives a rude awakening. Nor are there any dead men's shoes for which the competent are compelled to wait in their determination to get ahead. Individual exertion is the only lever by which one is able to get on top. The man who lingers for a friendly boost will grow grey while waiting. The "remittance man," who is sent to Canada by his parents because he is a constant source of anxiety and worry at home, and who is regularly forwarded a certain sum of money to keep him from starvation without work, has killed the chances of those who, deficient in pluck and confidence in their own abilities to forge ahead, are content to remain passive until others can give them a friendly push.

The heavy grinding mill of experience has worn out the axiom that only men with influence behind them can win. The man at the lowest rung of the ladder, who has no one to give him a friendly jolt upwards, will, through grit and pluck, get to the top long before the less competent, who is content to be pulled along at the end of somebody's influential shoe-strings. While the man with a card of introduction airs his heels outside the office of the principal, waiting for an interview to give him the required start for the position to which he aspires, the other man, working off his own bat, will carry off the job through his own sheer merit and capacity.

CHAPTER XXI

SOME EMIGRATION PROBLEMS, AND HOW THEY MAY BE SOLVED

THE tide of emigration has been setting very strongly, and in increasing volume, Canada-wards for many years past now, and the natural inference, judging from statistics, is that the country is filling up and becoming settled very speedily. This impression is quite erroneous. The last census came as a startling eye-opener concerning the true state of affairs. The illusion that settlement was proceeding effectively was dispelled ruthlessly.

The Dominion maintains a very energetic emigration campaign in this country. The machinery is perfect, no effort being spared to attract the most serviceable and competent, as well as enterprising, spirits to its shores. Yet, when the authorities receive the emigrants into the country, they fail to hold a very significant proportion. Why ? This is a question that has been asked time after time, and has been discussed vehemently in an academic manner, but no tangible answer or panacea has been found.

It is a problem which bristles with difficulties of a perplexing character to a country with conditions which demand peculiar treatment. Broadly, there are only two seasons in the year, spring and autumn being so brief as to be insignificant, and under the circumstances the violent extremes in climate are experienced fully. This contrast affects the labour market very decisively. In the summer

there is work enough and to spare for all—the demand overbalances the supply—but in the winter the pendulum kicks just as viciously to the opposite extreme. Then, with more than half the country and its staple industries shut down by the Ice and Snow King, the surplus labour brought in to combat the summer glut of work is thrown suddenly upon its own resources. The result is that a large volume of labour is sent drifting hither and thither, the sport of fortune, which, being unable to hibernate like the bear, has to do something to keep the human engine going until the summer comes round once more.

This flotsam and jetsam, comprising some of the best types of workmen that are to be found, unpossessed of capital wherewith to secure a firm establishment in the country, for the most part trickles southwards into the United States upon the close of the Canadian summer. South of the border the opportunities for employment are more varied and plentiful. The original intention of the wanderer is to tide things over through the winter in the States, and then to return to Canada with the spring ; but when a man has shaken down to a new job at good wages, and can hold it as long as he likes, naturally he concludes that the berth in the States among 100,000,000 people is better than two in Canada among less than 8,000,000 fellow-beings. The result is that Canada acts as a kind of sieve, where labour sorts itself out, the best and strongest turning to the south to leave the dregs to swell the ranks of the Canadian out-of-works.

The number of people who emigrate to Canada, and who shed the dust of the country from their feet at the end of the first summer, is astonishing. While the greater part wanders into the United States, a large proportion rambles westwards until it is pulled up by the Pacific Ocean. Yet it pushes onward to the Antipodes, to find a

home where snow and wintry blasts are unknown. According to statistics, the trend of emigration from Great Britain appears to have swung from New York to Canada, but these figures are fallacious. The flow of emigration to the United States from this country is just as imposing, if not more so, only it runs via Canada. The Dominion Government parades the figures of those who enter its boundaries, but is silent over those who pass out.

The Canadian authorities do not appear to have gripped the problem of emigration, and apparently fail to realize that the task of peopling its vast tracts of waste is just as much a business proposition as the maintenance of its harbours. Free tracts of land are given under the Homestead Law with a liberal hand, but of what avail is it to give a man a block of 160 acres if he has not the money wherewith to start operations, and is not in a position to wait a few years until the land is cleared and brought to a stage of productivity? It is all very well to say that the homesteader must be prepared to face short rations for two or three years, but even a hand-to-mouth existence costs something, and the man with no more than the £5 in his pocket which is necessary to enter the country is not prepared to face such a proposition.

Instead of giving the quarter-sections away in the raw condition, the Government should offer them as partly manufactured. Each 160 acres should be developed to a small degree for the new arrival. At least twenty acres of the land ought to be cleared and broken ready for the first cropping, to give a man a chance. Then, instead of leaving the immigrant to live as best he can in a tent, or whatever other kind of shelter he can run up temporarily, a substantial shack should be provided. The total cost of such preliminary operations would not represent more than £100, taking it all round. In some places it would

be much less, in others slightly more, according to the situation of the land and its virgin condition.

A partially-developed farm is far more attractive to the new arrival than an ugly blotch of tangled and twisted primeval forest or a stretch of green rolling prairie. The British emigrant can form no idea, when seated beside the fire of his home and dreaming of his future prospects in Canada, of what "virgin conditions" mean in the Dominion. The very blackest pictures he can conjure up in his mind are seen through rosy glasses, as he finds to his cost when he is dumped on to the land and able to look round. His first thought is to "chuck the whole thing up," and if he is unaccompanied, he generally follows this inclination, preferring to knock about from pillar to post, picking up a job and money as best he can, to starvation upon 160 acres which are about as inviting as the North Pole.

But if the farm were partially developed, it would be attractive. Arriving in the early spring, the immigrant would be able to buckle into the broken twenty acres in the confidence that within a very few weeks his farm would be bringing him something in. No matter how little the income might be, it would be sufficient to spur the man on. The present laws could be adapted to the situation by compelling the settler to continue, and to complete so much additional improvement work every year. In fact, the man on the land would have every inducement to do so. The subsequent improvements would be carried out steadily and persistently, because the man, having received a good boost, would strive heart and soul to complete the work.

There is nothing more back- and heart-breaking or soul-stifling than clearing heavy virgin land such as rolls away over the hills and dales of Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia, and the man has to be made of pretty stern

stuff, and supplied with plenty of pluck and spirit, to keep going against such odds. Under the present conditions, the average homesteader, from my own investigations and experiences, likens the first few years of his life to a dose of penal servitude, and, indeed, the simile is not far wrong.

There would be no necessity to make the settler a free present of the money laid out in initial improvement. It should rank as a loan, repayable within a certain number of years, the outstanding balance bearing a fair rate of interest—3, 4, or $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. would be equitable. The country could not complain that it was not receiving a fair return upon its investment, inasmuch as it guarantees the bonds of various other undertakings, many of which are more speculative than land, which is the backbone of any nation, up to these limits. If possible, the payment of a deposit should not be enforced, unless it were extremely nominal, because the average settler would require all his savings for acquiring seed, stock, and implements. The first payment should be small—say, from £5 to £10, according to the outlay on the improvement work—and should be collected at the end of the first year's labours. In fact, all the instalments during the first three years should be nominal, just to give the man the chance to get his feet planted firmly. Afterwards, the annual payments might be made heavier, gradually increasing every year until the debt was wiped off. The fundamental idea of such a scheme should be to permit the man to liquidate the debt out of revenue, of course giving him the option to increase the amount of any instalment, because a year's fruit from the land might enable him to contribute a heavier payment without straining his resources, and he should also have the right to dispose of the balance in one sum if he felt so disposed. In other words, the man should be able to buy 160 acres of free-

hold land in Canada as easily and comfortably as he can acquire £5 worth of furniture in Britain.

The existing homestead law need not be repealed, but such a scheme made merely supplementary thereto, with such modifications in the present legislation as the latter might render necessary. For instance, a settler should not be permitted to secure his patent for his farm in fewer years than is the practice now in vogue, and the value of the annual improvements effected under his own initiative should be equal to, or slightly more, than is demanded at present, owing to the man having received a substantial start. Under any circumstances, the settler should be refused the title to his land until he had repaid the cost of the Government's initial improvements, and should not be permitted to sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of it, until the quarter-section became his own unfettered property.

From the Government point of view, the investment would become entirely self-supporting. No risks whatever would be incurred, as the official surveyors would guard against indifferent land being brought within the scheme. If the project were run upon a basis of, say, £100,000 being voted for the work per annum, in the first year 1,000 farms would be started, and possibly 6,000 people settled tightly in the country, on the average of six souls to a family. From the end of the first year the scope of development would extend automatically more and more every year, because the instalments and interest would swell the annual appropriation, allowing further money for the undertaking, somewhat after the manner of the well-known "snowball system." In the course of a few years the annual appropriation could be stopped, and the scheme permitted to continue upon the instalments and interest coming in from the previous annual investments.

The practicability of such a project is afforded by the results of the Canadian Pacific Railway's experiment upon similar lines. Some three or four years ago this corporation set aside a sum of money for "ready-made farms upon the easy-payment system." The idea received such whole-hearted support that now it has been converted into a substantial commercial undertaking. The control, however, should be vested in the Government in preference to private enterprise, unless the latter was hedged in tightly by restrictions, so as to prevent abuses and the infliction of any hardships upon the settler, in which event the scheme would be brought into disrepute.

There is no reason to doubt that, if the Canadian Government entertained the project seriously, a loan would be instantly forthcoming. A guaranteed interest of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. upon a land loan would make a wide appeal, and, surmising that the Government set the rate of interest at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the homesteader, the difference of 1 per cent. should be ample to defray the cost of operating the enterprise. Indeed, it could be carried out by the existing homestead organization through the agent of the Land Office for the district. It would not be necessary even to create any new machinery.

The future of Canada depends entirely upon the settlement of its land, and there is another possible method by which this end might be accomplished rapidly and positively. It is especially applicable to new territories while they are being opened up. Armies of men are engaged in carrying forward the settling forces of civilization, such as the building of railways. At the present moment it is safe to assume that some 50,000 men—practically unskilled labour—is finding employment upon these enterprises. Every man represents a unit in the floating and drifting population of the Dominion. When their tasks are completed, they wander about aimlessly seeking for

work, or waste their substance in riotous excesses. They have no tie to any one spot, or even to the country ; there is no inducement to settle and to become permanent residents ; they may be in Canada to-day and in the States to-morrow. The very character of their work stamps them as men who are likely to develop into healthy, energetic, law-abiding citizens, but not a single straw of encouragement is thrown out to them. Quite one-tenth of the present population of Canada may be reckoned in the category of "drifting," and, being birds of passage, they cannot be construed as inhabitants of Canada. They are merely workers in the land, who, when the bottom of the labour market falls out, hike to assist in digging the Panama Canal or some other undertaking outside the Dominion.

These men receive possibly a clear one or two guineas a week in wages after they have paid out all expenses. They cannot amass capital very quickly. Even if they were as thrifty as the proverbial Scotsman, they could not put by more than £80 or £100 per annum. Obviously, it is impossible for them to comply with the present Homestead Law, no matter how earnestly they might desire to settle down. Why not give them the opportunity ? It should be possible to amend the law in such a way as to attract these labourers.

The end could be achieved satisfactorily if the Government were to consider the period of labour upon the railway as equivalent to residence for a similar length of time upon a homestead. Quarter-sections might be placed at the disposal of men who would undertake to work for three years continuously upon the grade, and then upon the completion of that term, to have handed to them the 160 acres of freehold free from restrictions. Of course, it might be argued that such a system would lead to wild speculation in land ; that the labourers would

make their applications for their quarter-sections, and then, when they had received them, would transfer them to some land-looter at a small figure, without carrying out a pennyworth of improvements. This practice would be followed by a few undoubtedly, but the majority would cling to their property, as it would offer them something tangible, such as is not within their perspective at present.

Suppose 100,000 men made applications for quarter-sections directly such a scheme were sanctioned. The Government would be certain of the services of that army of 100,000 men upon certain undertakings, the completion of which are urgent, for three years. The railways, or what not, would not be held up periodically from a dearth of labour; there would be none of that scurrying round from time to time in the endeavour to hustle men to the grade. The line would be completed in a third of the time which is necessary under existing conditions, and the country would derive the benefit from this more expeditious completion. On the other hand, the Government would be parting with only 25,000 square miles of land—a very small total, considering the vast area of the country which still demands settlement—and this method of disposal would not cause the Government to suffer in any way, as it gives the land away to-day.

If an inducement of this character were held out, it would prove highly beneficial. From my associations with the grade and the men in the railway camps, I know full well that a large majority would settle down permanently on the land if they were only given a fair chance. In many instances the men would be encamped in close proximity to the farm to which they would become entitled, and they would accordingly put in their leisure upon its improvement, so that it might be in a first-class going condition by the time their three years on the grade was completed. The Government might

even go so far as to clear and break a portion of every quarter-section, and provide a shack in readiness for the labourer's permanent occupation, the man contributing the cost thereof in instalments meanwhile from his wages. The cost of the improvement, if it represented, say, an outlay of £75, might be made payable in annual sums by the grader during the three years he was at constructional work, in accordance with the terms of his contract.

Another advantage would result from the scheme. The land set aside for such disposal might be allocated entirely in the new country in which the graders were toiling. In a single stroke the new country would be set going, the nucleus of a healthy community would be settled on either side of the railway running through the territory, and the revenue-earning prospects of the new line would be improved vastly. When a trunk railway penetrates entirely new country, it is anticipated that a period of ten years must pass before the line contiguous thereto becomes sufficiently opened up and productive enough to render the line profitable. This shows how slowly settlement and development proceeds if left to its own devices. But, by giving the country a good start-off and the railway-graders a chance to become permanent residents, progressive expansion would follow before the line was open for traffic.

The time has come when Canada will have to consider seriously the modification of its homesteading laws. Other colonies and countries during the past few years have entered the British emigration market, and by means of far better attractions than are possessed by the Dominion are diverting the emigration tide to their respective shores. In this respect Australia is manifesting commendable energy. Curiously enough, I found a yearning throughout the West among the British homesteading population to try their luck in Australia, where

it was maintained that a man had far rosier chances of making good than were offered in the Dominion. Many had gone, I found, and the letters they wrote to their former friends and neighbours were irresistibly enticing. Certainly, in Canada agricultural pursuits have been narrowed down very considerably, owing to the craze to grow wheat, and unless this tendency is checked and diversified farming receives more encouragement, the Dominion will be relegated to a back seat. The other colonies have not the bogey of a long, hard, pitilessly cold winter to scare the settlers. Also, the Australian Government has reduced emigration to a scientific and soundly commercial basis. Considering the strategical position that the Dominion holds geographically and economically, financially and commercially, in regard to the heart of the Empire, its position should be assured. Agriculture is the sheet-anchor of every country, but its scope must be broad. Wheat, while an indispensable commodity, will often lead to a nation's undoing. A few years ago the United States held the world as a wheat-growing country. It was passed by its younger rival to the north, and to-day Canada is in danger of being outpaced in this respect by the Argentine, Australia, and Russia. Climatically, Canada is not comparable with its greatest rival, Australia, and in the panning of the emigration sand, unless a more up-to-date and liberal policy is displayed, the Antipodes will receive the gold, and Canada the dross, of labour.

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